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THE REPORT

September 2025

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A MAGAZINE FOR THE AUSTRALIAN SHOOTER AND
THE GREAT AUSTRALIAN OUTDOORS ENTHUSIAST



THE RISE OF
WEDGETAIL
INDUSTRIES

Lithgow Arms

AUSSIE MADE RIFLES,
START TO FINISH

CONFIDENCE
WITHOUT THE
KICK

28g for juniors
and women



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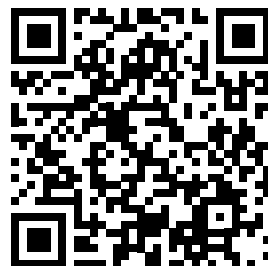
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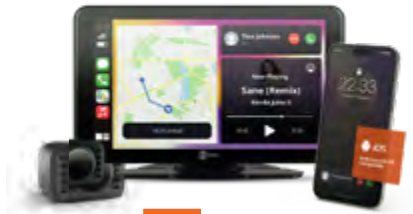


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Enter now for your
CHANCE TO WIN!



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Editorial

In Australia we are spoilt for choice in firearm brands. Different generations have their favourites, and their memories are obviously made up of what was dominating sales at the time. My father's era was limited to Browning, Winchester and Remington and ex-military conversions - a bit like the era of Holden, Ford and the Toyota Hilux. My firearm brand memories are so much more diverse and off the tip of my tongue I can name Sako, CZ, Tikka, Smith & Wesson, Glock, Kimber, Beretta, Ruger, SIG Sauer, Miroku, Tanfoglio and, one I am proud I can pronounce, Weihrauch – they make a fantastic .22 air rifle.

All of these have one thing in common – they are all made overseas, and I am fine with that. Having access to purchase from these high-quality and renowned brands is a privilege that is not enjoyed by all around the world, with tariffs, customs rules, trade barriers and currency issues restricting the choices for overseas recreational hunters and shooters. Our dollar is doing pretty well in the world market, and we have a strong pool of buyers. This makes us an attractive market for international firearm manufacturers who team up with Australian wholesalers, distributors and ultimately gun shops to promote their wares to the one million shooters in this nation.

Anyone reading this magazine is obviously interested in the history and developments of firearms. The job of *The Report* magazine, besides informing and entertaining you, is to showcase the wide range of products available to you as a hunter, collector or target shooter.

Globalisation and the relaxation of import duties and the expansion of free trade has greatly enhanced our choice in all types of products, be it televisions, fridges or cars, and reduced the sales price. The cost that it does carry is an eroding of our own manufacturing base and we have seen the effects it has had on the Australian firearms industry, just as it has had on other industries like car production. That is why it is so good to celebrate two local brands that are going against the grain and offering to us a wide selection of firearms that are proudly manufactured in Australia. Congratulations to Lithgow Arms and Wedgetail Industries on their civilian firearms production. And while we're talking about Australian companies, we'd be remiss not to mention the defence munitions and powder that accompany these firearms coming from the Nioa Group and ADI.

I still am very proud of the Italian, Finnish and American firearms in my safe, but I am equally in admiration of the Australian ones. You can read all about them in this issue.

Tim Bannister
Co-Managing Editor



A new magazine for the Australian Shooter
and Great Australian Outdoors enthusiast
Volume 1.6

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PO Box 2443,
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Web: ssaaqld.org.au
General enquiries: 07 3281 3447
Membership enquiries: 07 3492 9237
Editorial enquiries: news@ssaaqld.org.au
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Tim Bannister and Jennifer Martens
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Manager: Karoline Wasiak
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Web and Electronic Design:

Ignition Media, Nicole Brooke

Graphic Design:

Ignite Design Gold Coast, Sara Campbell,
Sarah Rowlands

Advertising Enquiries:

To inquire about advertising opportunities,
phone Karoline Wasiak on 0412 486 071
or email karoline.wasiak@ssaaqld.org.au

Writers and Photographers:

Tim Bannister, Nathan Besh,
Joanne Heathcote, Paul Heiser,
Rod Hoare, Brendan Jones, David Henty,
Steve Marchant, Jennifer Martens,
Jamie Mayne, Taylah Campbell May,
Rachael Oxborrow, Nick Rositano,
Liz Rymill, Neil Schultz, Sam Talbot,
Samantha Warren, Ted Springs,
Dallas Walker (Instagram: @DallasWalker._)



Letters

A sign of the times

I was assisting a friend clear up a relative’s estate earlier in the year and we came across this screwed to an old empty ammunition box. While no doubt a reproduction, it is likely to be at least 70 years old and matches the time when Hal and his wife were in France.



It points an attitude to firearms when another time and reads, ‘MESSIEURS VOUS ETES PRIES DE DECHARGER VOS ARMES AVANT D’ENTRER DANS CET ETABLISSEMENT. GENTLEMEN ARE KINDLY REQUESTED TO DISCHARGE THEIR WEAPONS BEFORE ENTERING THIS ESTABLISHMENT. Yvette Coquelot 69 Boulevard des Galantes Paris 1er Janvier 1869’ It is believed the copper plaque was originally on a wall or bar of a Parisian hotel at a time when firearms were regularly carried by patrons.

By the way, a shooting friend from Rockhampton sent me a link to your magazine. Great work!

David, Mitcham, SA

Work with us, not against us

Editor’s Note: Long-term shooter and member (30+ years) Alan wrote to us detailing the many difficulties he had in transferring his firearms licence when he moved states numerous times. His letter highlighted the importance of firearms registries working **with** licensed firearm owners not **against** them. Alan’s letter can be summed up with his words:

“Should a licensed, qualified, correctly registered firearm owner be able to relocate between states and have his credentials recognised by his destination state with a sensible minimum of legislative requirements and obstruction, as it once was? Yes.”

Alan M, via email

I can see clearly now

Congratulations to your graphic designers for making the text in *The Report* magazine larger. It has been a pleasure to open up the magazine and not have to get out the magnifying glass like I do with some of my other magazines that I subscribe to. I don’t understand why some designers think it is helpful to have tiny writing surrounded by lots of white space? If I want to read white space, I will buy a pack of Reflex printing paper and read that!

Many thanks for considering us who are not 20/20 anymore.

Geoff, Holland Park, Qld

Editor’s Note: It was a deliberate decision to publish with larger text and aim for clearer reading with the font of Times New Roman. We are glad you appreciate it and thanks for the feedback.

Rifle to pistol

Dear *The Report* team,

I have been a hunter and 3P/4P shooter for many years. I’m still a hunter but I’ve gotten bored of rifle competitions. Instead, I have gone down the path of getting my handgun licence and have started Target Pistol, as well as some other general handgun shooting.

The shift to pistols has rejuvenated my interest in target shooting and going to the range. I suppose I not only have to, but I am much more excitedly going to the range for pistol shooting.

I used to never have an interest in pistols, but I have found it immensely enjoyable. I recommend anyone feeling their shooting going stale give pistols, or really any new type of firearm competition, a shot.

Jeff, long time SSAA member

State vs state idea

When shooters go to National Championships they are often grouped into their home-state. I like this idea, and I am wondering if there could be a ‘State of Origin’ shooting competition, spanning multiple competitions of course.

Representing your home state is a great honour and it would be cool to see more shooters given the chance to face off against one another representing their homeland. It would be friendly rivalry of course.

Jasmine, Townsville, Qld

News

LET US KNOW YOUR THOUGHTS

We want to know your thoughts on shooting, hunting and the great Australian Outdoors so put pen to paper or hit the keyboard. Letters may appear in any of our electronic and printed media including our e-newsletter, websites and *The Report* magazine. Last names optional but please include your first name and town for publishing and SSAA Queensland membership number for verification purposes only.

Mail to: SSAA Queensland, Member Letters, PO Box 2443 North Ipswich, Qld 4305 or

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SSAA Queensland E-Newsletters

Did you receive SSAA Queensland’s August e-newsletter? If not, be sure to update your email address via ssaaqld.org.au/membership/change-details/ so you are always up to date with the latest Association news.

Each issue features an important message from our president and shooting industry news updates. If your branch has an event to promote or results to share, be sure to let us know at news@ssaaqld.org.au and we can include it in the e-newsletter and on our website.

Past newsletters can be found on the SSAA Queensland website under the News and Media section.

What’s old is new again

Did you know the *Report* was the original title of the quarterly SSAA newsletter back in 1962? And now in 2025, SSAA Queensland has revived that masthead as the official publication of your Association.

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Australian warranty and support for Australian rifles. Image: Dallas Walker

Lithgow Arms

AUSSIE MADE RIFLES,
START TO FINISH



Skilled Australian workers making high quality firearms at Lithgow Arms.



Every barrel is crafted and rifled in-house, measured to within three microns. Image: Dallas Walker



Lithgow Arms has been making firearms in Australia since 1912. Image: Dallas Walker

Why don't more Australians buy Australian-made rifles?



Built for precision. Every component is manufactured and assembled on-site at Lithgow Arms. Dallas Walker

By Sam Talbot

At Lithgow Arms, every rifle is built to the same standard as those supplied to the Australian Defence Force. From raw steel to test-fired firearm, the entire process happens on-site with nothing outsourced. Most of their work is military, but their civilian rifles are held to the same standard. And yet, these quality rifles are not on the radar of many Australians.

During a recent tour of the factory, I was struck by the level of precision involved. Barrels are drilled and other parts are made using specialised machines capable of tolerances down to three microns – about the width of a spider’s web. Measuring stations track every stage of the build, from raw material to heat-

treated part. A level of scrutiny required for military rifles, but which is also applied to civilian ones.

“Lithgow competes on price and quality with any other manufacturer, but unlike many competitors, it’s Aussie made,” says Chris Burton, Product Line Manager at Lithgow Arms.

“Every Australian should have at least one Lithgow rifle,” says Chris. “And since it’s a civilian rifle made to the same standard as the military. You’d be doing yourself a favour by getting one.”

Chris also says there’s no need to run in a Lithgow rifle - it’s already run in for you and they are ready to preform from day one.

And yet, despite the quality and price being on par with leading imports, the local market continues to underplay the value of buying Australian-made. Lithgow’s sales aren’t quite where they would like them to be and they can produce more rifles, they just

“Lithgow competes on price and quality with any other manufacturer, but unlike many competitors, it’s Aussie made”

need the market to start demanding more.

An increase in business would also ensure the longevity of Lithgow Arms continuing to exist as a company. After all, Lithgow Arms is owned by Thales Australia, and in turn by French company Thales. Lithgow mostly rely on military contracts, but a greater civilian demand would help ensure the business and the jobs of well over 100 workers.



Backed by military-grade tolerances, this rifle delivers reliability from day one. Image: Dallas Walker

What makes Lithgow Arms unique?

- 100% in-house manufacturing – includes tooling to electroplating.
- 70+ machines - each with a specific role in production.
- 3-month build time - from raw steel to tested rifle.
- Measured to within 3 microns - much smaller than a human hair.
- Civilians get military standards - same tolerances, same testing.

Maintaining the ability to manufacture in Australia is an important issue for a lot of people, especially with the threat that if it does disappear, it may be impossible to get back. Lithgow employs more than 15 apprentices and a team of skilled workers. The facility also houses the only high-grade electroplating unit of its kind in the country, a unique and crucial step in strengthening parts like barrels and firing pins.

“Lithgow rifles are similar quality, similar price, and generally very similar to any other rifle out there - and yet Australians keep buying overseas,” says Matt Duquemin, Director of Integrated Weapons and Sensors at Thales. “I just can’t understand why.”

“If you need parts and services down the track, you never know if an overseas company will cut that out,” says Matt. “With us, you know we’re right here - and we’ve been here for ages.” Lithgow offer lots of after-purchase support to customers.

For a brief period during COVID, Lithgow’s civilian rifle sales doubled. Imported products became harder to source, and suddenly Australian shooters tuned their attention to a world-class option in their own backyard. But once international shipping returned, many buyers reverted to their familiar habits.

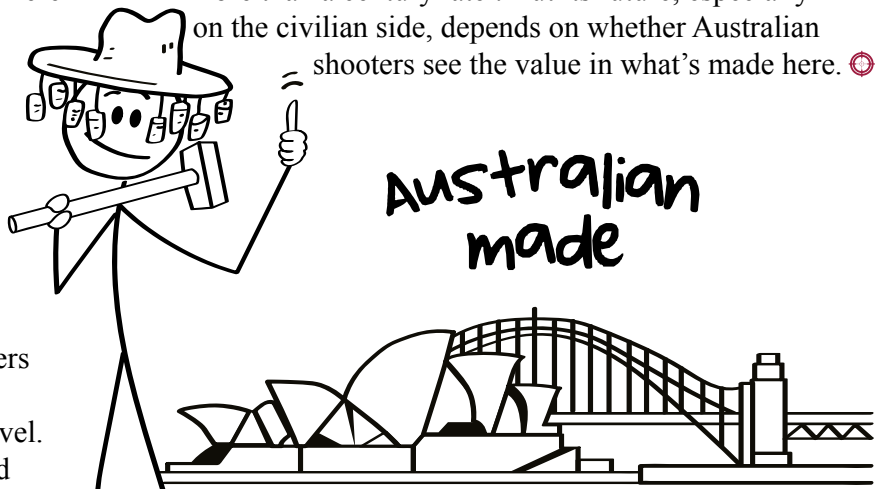
Some argue that the playing field isn’t level. Imported rifles often benefit from scale and

dealer incentives, and shooters may assume overseas means superior. But in Lithgow’s case, the opposite is often true. Their rifles are made to military-grade tolerances, proofed on-site, and backed by a service team that works with real factory knowledge.

“There’s no mystery with us,” says Chris. “If something goes wrong, we built the rifle - we know how to fix it.”

Some people have even suggested considering tariffs or limits on imported firearms to boost local manufacturing, but for now, Lithgow Arms continues to compete the hard way: on quality, reliability and history.

And that history runs deep. The factory first began military firearm production in 1912, and it’s still going more than a century later. But its future, especially on the civilian side, depends on whether Australian shooters see the value in what’s made here. 🇦🇺



ATN THE FUTURE OF OPTICS

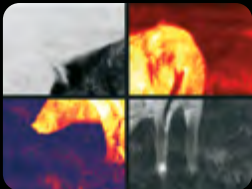


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THE RISE OF WEDGETAIL INDUSTRIES

By Sam Talbot

Australia doesn't have many firearms manufacturers, so it's worth celebrating the few we have. Victorian-based Wedgetail Industries recently marked its 10-year anniversary, continuing its mission to provide Australian shooters with high-quality, Australian-made firearms. Their ascent has mirrored that of their namesake, the wedge-tailed eagle - swift, powerful and soaring.

Founded in 2015 by lifelong shooter and qualified product designer Alex Knott, Wedgetail Industries was born from Alex noticing how limited choices there were for Australian shooters.



The founder of Wedgetail Industries, Alex Knott.

*“Wedgetail
had a
mission:
to change
everything”*

“In 2015, Australian shooters were very limited for choice. The market was dominated by products from offshore manufacturers that were lacking innovation, had poor ergonomics, long lead times and patchy aftermarket customer support; Wedgetail had a mission: to change everything,” said Alex.

Wedgetail says its focus is on customer needs, and that innovation is their major point of difference compared to other manufacturers. The company says the needs of the customer must always come first. According to Alex, the core mission of the company is to create high quality, durable firearms that suit the exact needs of the operator.

“Human factors, also known as, ergonomics, are at the heart of the Wedgetail product designs. It is essential that a firearm fits the human operating it. Often, shooters are expected to simply fit themselves around a firearm when it should be the other way around,” he says.



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The MPR Mini.



THE BUSINESS

As one of only a handful of Aussie firearms manufacturers, the company has experienced plenty of challenges. Australia's state-by-state firearm laws make it difficult to create products that are legal everywhere. Alex says they are steadily overcoming this by pushing the boundaries of modern design.

"While many view these restrictions as barriers, we take the view that these constraints force us to constantly innovate, to try to find ways to work within legislation, to reach our customers in every state and to develop products that give them the high performing, high quality and durable firearms they are looking for."

Like many manufacturers, Wedgetail balances civilian and defence contracts. Over the past decade, it's built strategic partnerships with Lithgow Arms,

"The company has grown rapidly in the past two years and is still growing to service demand."

Beretta Defence Technologies, state and federal police, and special interest groups both locally and overseas.

Being able to support those in the defence and law enforcement space is something that Wedgetail is very proud of. Having both sides to the business is an asset, but Wedgetail is firmly focussed on recreational shooters and hunters, as well as professional shooters.

Another challenge of being an Australian manufacturer is the higher labour cost, but Wedgetail believes in its product, and while it may be too expensive for some, the company backs itself to deliver high quality.

"Everyone wants to see Aussie-made products do well. But we've found the major barrier is the price point. We produce high-quality firearms, but to be viable, we need to be profitable and so not everyone can afford it, but we are listening very closely to what Australian shooters want," says Ben Jarratt from Wedgetail.



The mysterious Orion Hunter rifle which will be Wedgetails first bolt-action is coming soon.

PRODUCTS

The company has grown rapidly in the past two years and is still growing to service demand. While it manufactures much of its gear in-house, Wedgetail also works with external suppliers where large-scale production makes more sense.

"The decision to make our Modular Pump Rifle (MPR) series pump action rifles was born from our experience building high-performance firearms for professional users," says Alex.

Wedgetail adapted technologies and design elements from the Modular Sporting Rifle (MSR) format and brought them into the hands of Australian hunters and sporting shooters.

"Creating the MPR gives Australian shooters a product that is modular, adjustable and well supported with a wide range of aftermarket accessories," says Ben. "It's something that just made sense to us."

Wedgetail also notices regional trends in buyer preferences.

"The further north you go, the more interest our customers have in things like the pump action in .308, while the further south you go the more interest in the mini in .223 and .300 Blackout," says Ben.



"It won't be the cheapest thing out there, but for the money, it'll be very hard to go past".

ORION HUNTER

"We want Australian-made rifles in the hands of Australian shooters, at a price point most people can afford. And most of those shooters are going to be hunters," says Ben.

The next big release from Wedgetail Industries will be the Orion Hunter, named after the constellation. The bolt-action rifle is a clear move to better service Australian hunters, and *The Report* and our readers are excited to see its release next month (October). Ben says there is even more in the works as well, including some longer-range stuff.

With a decade of experience behind the company and a bold new product line ahead, Wedgetail Industries is one to watch - and we'll be bringing you a full review of the *Orion Hunter* very soon.

"It won't be the cheapest thing out there, but for the money, it'll be very hard to go past".



Wedgetail are making Cat B, C and D firearms.



The company is of course named after Australia's largest bird of prey by the same name.



WEDGETAIL MPR MINI

The tactical choice for a new
breed of conservationist

By Joanne Heathcote

Spotlighting feral cats is one of my favourite ways to spend a night. There's a strange thrill in it – their eye-shine punches out of the darkness like tiny headlights, freezing for a moment before they vanish into the grass. Josh and I have spent many after-work evenings on a remote Cape York wildlife sanctuary chasing that eye-shine with his Weatherby .308, Swarovski scope, and mounted torch – completely in our element while doing our part in a bigger ecological story.

You might imagine a first-time rifle buyer going for a classic bolt-action – something simple, proven, passed down by a dad or granddad. But when I needed to collect feral cat DNA samples for a CSIRO research initiative, I didn't follow the traditional script.

Enter the Wedgetail MPR Mini – a compact, Aussie-made, pump-action rifle chambered in .223 WYLDE. Top it off with a Pulsar Thermion 2 DUO DXP50 thermal scope and you've got a setup that turns heads in both the shooting world and the conservation field. It's not the rifle most people expect a new shooter – let alone a woman – to pick. But after several nights in the field and three cats in the bag, I knew I'd made the right decision.

This cat didn't stand a chance with the rifle, scope and monocular combo Joanne employed.

How it started

I found myself increasingly frustrated whenever someone lost track of a cat I'd spotted in the beam. Sometimes we'd get that flash of eye-shine—then nothing. It was maddening. And heaven help anyone who missed a cat on my watch! Probably not entirely fair, since I wasn't the one holding the rifle.

Then, along came Nathan, a vertebrate pest management expert who'd been brought in to help reduce feral cat numbers on the property. He spoke to us in detail about the advantages of using thermal to stay on target. The next day, Graham – the property manager – sneakily switched on his thermal monocular while Nathan was asleep after a night hunt. Our glowing heat signatures looked ridiculously funny through the lens, and I've no idea how our laughter didn't wake him – but in that moment, something clicked.

Not long after, I had a thermal monocular of my own. It definitely improved our chances, but as time went on, I realised that if I was going to do this properly, I needed a thermal scope, too.

Fast forward to the Weipa Rodeo a year later, where I ran into Nathan again. By then, I had gotten my firearms licence. I told him I wanted to shoot feral cats for conservation and asked what he'd recommend. His answer was immediate: "Go with the Wedgetail MPR Mini and a Pulsar thermal. Trust me."

That was good enough for me.

Without wasting time, I submitted a Permit to Acquire and placed an order for the Wedgetail MPR Mini and the Pulsar Thermion 2 DUO DXP50.



Joanne Heathcote with her Wedgetail MPR Mini and Pulsar Thermion 2 DUO DXP50 scope combo – a winning combination!

Torch + thermal: a deadly duo

I've found traditional spotlighting is still one of the best ways to find cats, something I'm good at thanks to my light-sensitive eyes. They're notoriously elusive, but those glowing beacons always give them away. The trick is what you do after you spot them.

"Shining a torch on a feral cat sometimes only gives you seconds, if that, before it slinks off..."

Shining a torch on a feral cat sometimes only gives you seconds, if that, before it slinks off. A whisper of movement, a bad line of sight, and they're gone.

That's where thermal changes the game. My go-to method is now torch first for eye-shine, then switch straight to thermal – either through a monocular or the thermal scope itself. The Thermion 2 DUO makes this seamless. Once you're on

thermal, the cat's oblivious and will often sit there, unaware it's being watched. That extra time gives you the chance to close the distance, double-check your backdrop, and line up a clean shot.

This torch-to-thermal combo gives you the best of both worlds – fast detection and quiet tracking. And when it comes to DNA collection, precision matters. One bad shot can cost you the sample.

Why the pump action?

I already knew I'd love the pump action for feral cat work – that was part of the appeal from the start. As someone new to shooting (and famously bad at multitasking), the design just made sense. It offers fast cycling, intuitive handling, and the ability to stay locked on target without breaking eye contact. Unlike a bolt-action, the pump lets you cycle with your support hand, keeping your trigger hand and shooting eye steady.

Out bush, where conditions are never ideal and your first shot might not always drop the cat, seconds count. This platform lets me reload quickly and stay on target – no fuss, no floundering.

WEDGETAIL MPR MINI

Built for the bush, backed by purpose

I didn't come into shooting from a sport or hobby background. I came from conservation. Every feral cat in Australia kills an estimated three to 20 native animals per day. The damage is staggering.

My focus isn't on trophies – it's on protecting native wildlife under threat. And I'm using tools that help me do that job ethically and effectively.

The .223 WYLDE gives me the option to utilise either .223 REM or 5.56 NATO ammunition, both of which give me the stopping power for clean kills. The Pulsar scope ensures no target is fired on without positive ID. And the Wedgetail MPR Mini delivers speed, stability, and confidence – even in thick vegetation and under the surge of adrenaline.

The little things that matter

I'll soon be switching to the muzzle blast mitigation device the Ninox QD Blast Diverter MOD 2. It's lightweight, screws directly onto the muzzle brake and makes a noticeable difference by directing the shot blast forward, which matters to me, especially since we can't use suppressors.

I've also requested Wedgetail's new, improved trigger, a standard feature on the new Pro-Edition rifles. I've had no complaints with the current one; in fact, as a relatively new shooter, you could argue that a slightly firmer pull is a good place to start. But now that I've built some confidence, I'm keen to try the lighter, more responsive feel of the new trigger.

These are small tweaks, but they matter when you're chasing performance in the field.



This bush predator tipped the scales at nearly 4.5kg, caught after a feast on a vulnerable Goodman's rock wallaby – a stark reminder of the toll feral cats take on native wildlife.

Final word

I may be a first-time shooter, but I'm quickly learning what works and this setup, the Wedgetail MPR Mini paired with the Pulsar Thermion 2 DUO, has already proven its worth. It's fast, reliable, and tailored for conservation fieldwork. Whether you're a land manager, professional shooter or a scientist getting your hands dirty, this rifle and scope combo gives you an edge in the field.

There's a quiet confidence that comes from knowing your tools are doing exactly what they were designed to do, especially when every shot counts. ©

Gear list:

- **Rifle:** Wedgetail MPR Mini (.223 WYLDE, pump-action)
- **Scope:** Pulsar Thermion 2 DUO DXP50
- **Thermal Monocular:** Hikmicro OWL OQ35

Joanne with her first-ever feral cat, thanks to the Wedgetail MPR Mini and Pulsar Thermion 2 DUO DXP50 scope combo.



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FEELING THE NEED **FOR SPEED**

An introduction to chronographs *By Nathan Besh*

FEELING THE NEED FOR SPEED

WHY DO I NEED A CHRONOGRAPH?

What is a ballistic chronograph? Put simply, it's a device used to measure the speed of a projectile once it has been fired from the barrel of a firearm.

Chronographs are comprised of a few fundamental components:

Sensors - Something that can detect a signal, commonly these are optical – operating in a specific wavelength (visible light or infra-red), electromagnetic waves (radar), or physical mediums such as a pendulum or wire break device. For optical devices, the common configuration is two sensors placed a known distance apart. Radars have an inbuilt sensor that detects a specific frequency of electromagnetic waves.

Emitters - These work in conjunction with the sensors, they emit what the sensors are looking to detect. When the emitter's output is interrupted, the sensor detects this interruption and infers a projectile has passed. Emitters can be an electromagnetic source (radar units) or optical sources such as infra-red LEDs or visible lights or the sun/sky.

Timing - You can detect the projectile with the sensors, so how long did it take to pass the known distance between sensing events? All parts are critical, but the timing has one of the most significant impacts on accuracy. If you don't really know how long it took to travel between the two sensors, you cannot accurately determine the projectile speed. The faster the projectile speed, the more important this component becomes.

Interface - We measured the time and know the distance, now we need to make it useful to a person. At a bare minimum, something to convert the time into a meaningful reading – i.e. speed and display it to the user via an inbuilt screen or an application on a mobile device.

Legal requirements

In some countries chronographs are for legal purposes; the UK and many European countries have legal requirements around what can be owned without licensing – such as lower-powered air guns and pistols. To stay on the right side of the law, you need a chronograph to ensure your firearm remains under the legal limits.

Tuning and performance

No matter what you are doing, the goal is the same – putting the projectile exactly where you want it to go. For powder burners, this is how you know the performance and characteristics of the load you have developed. With the immense improvements in airguns, it is now also a mandatory tool. Back in the day, air rifles were seen by many as 'just for plinking'. But during the past few years there's been immense developments. One of the biggest achievements has been the development of slugs for air rifles; this has opened a huge amount of possibilities. It is now common to be able to purchase an air rifle that is more than adequate for dispatching moderately sized game such as pigs or deer. So, what load or ammunition configurations work? To answer that you need a chronograph!



Humane-ness

Whether for pest control or hunting, it is essential that quarry is dispatched humanely. While there can be specifications on minimum calibre, a competent shooter knows a mildly paced baseball meets a calibre requirement – but is not an effective solution. Ensuring minimum required energy on impact, coupled with high accuracy from tuning and refinement, ensures an accurate and humane kill every time. A chronograph can be used to calculate the energy of projectiles and can be used to calculate the energy downrange.

Diagnosis

For air guns, it is the go-to tool which is used to verify that every part of your kit is working harmoniously. There are a lot of components that have to work together to produce consistent shot velocities so that the same thing happens every time you pull the trigger. Seals, springs, moving surfaces, friction and temperatures can all have an impact, and the chronograph can prove if they are all healthy.



By using a combined training tool and chronograph, you can dial in your equipment and have data to perfect your shooting position and technique. Here the NateChrony SteadyShot is providing feedback on muzzle movement/acceleration, so you can test and see the actual impact of different positions, grips, and trigger pull techniques on the movement of the muzzle. The combined chronograph helps you know if it was you or a bad pellet/equipment that caused any poor shots.

HOW ACCURATE IS A CHRONOGRAPH?

Accuracy is probably the biggest misunderstanding of chronographs; they are not as accurate as most people think they are. Many times on forums I've quoted the published specifications of various units and people are constantly surprised. It is not uncommon for specifications to state an accuracy of +/- 5fps at 1,000fps – that is 10fps difference at 1,000fps. There is also one manufacturer in the airgun space that does not have any specifications on any of their chronographs! Why are people paying lots of money for a precision device with no understanding of how precise it actually is?

A lot of this misunderstanding comes from sales/marketing techniques making them appear more accurate than they are; the best example of this is adding decimal places to the results. I tested a cheap generic device, which provided two decimal places on all results. This makes it seem as though it can produce results to a fraction of 1fps. However, at 1,000fps it was not able to tell the difference between 998fps and 1,001fps! It would give a heap of results of either 998.74 or 1,001.03, with nothing in between.

There are two types of accuracy when it comes to chronographs, and one may be more important to you than the other. This is key to selecting the right chronograph for you. The first type is the difference between the chronograph reading and the actual projectile speed. This is critical when you have legal power limits or wish to ensure a maximum/minimum power or energy level. The other type is shot-to-shot resolution or consistency. If you shoot twice, the

actual projectile speed is 750.51fps each shot, and your chronograph reads 760.51fps each shot – that can still be useful when you are performing tuning work and looking for consistency and improvements in speed. The actual number may not matter – as long as you are getting good results on target and your shots are consistent.

Cheap chronographs

A specific word about these. It is not uncommon to see people purchasing cheap airsoft or generic chronographs off online marketplaces for less than \$50. These *can* be good; however, there are always many reports of 'I had one of those and it was 40fps off and inconsistent'. When you purchase a chronograph, you are trying to purchase a precision timing instrument. Cheap generic units are a completely unknown in terms of quality; they are clearly not tested or calibrated. Is it wise to purchase a product of unknown quality? How can you trust any results?

WHICH CHRONOGRAPHS ARE ACCURATE?

Start by checking the specifications; however, it may not be clear if these are technical specifications or marketing material. Avoid choosing based on brand name – one of the biggest brands has a well-known reputation for producing invalid results in shot strings, and retailers report high return/warranty rates. The best indicator is to look for units that have evidence and proof of testing and calibration – a QC sticker applied at a factory is not evidence. 🚫

Using a well-designed, muzzle-mounted chronograph at the range offers superb data, while being immune from outside interference such as changing light conditions (clouds) or other chronographs such as radar units.



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LEUPOLD BX-4 RANGE HD

GEN2 12X50 BINOCULARS

The ultimate all-in-one hunting binoculars

By Steve Marchant

Leupold optics - a brief history

In 1907, brothers-in-law Fred Leupold and Adam Volpel went into business together making surveying instruments by hand. J.C. Stevens became a partner in Leupold and Volpel in 1914, after bringing his water level recording invention to the company. That same year, Fred Leupold's son, Marcus, joined the firm, and J.C. Stevens son, Robert, took a job with the company in 1939. In 1942 the company became Leupold and Stevens and remains so-named today.

Marcus Leupold was an avid outdoorsman, and after missing a buck one day because his scope fogged up, he swore he could make a better optic. After years of research, including lessons learned from World War II, Leupold introduced its first riflescope, the Plainsman, in 1947. With its interior evacuated of air and filled with pure nitrogen, which doesn't react to sudden changes in temperature, the Plainsman was the first American-built, truly fog-free riflescope.

Over the next 78 years, Leupold and Stevens continued to innovate and grow, adding new product lines to its inventory. Today Leupold is one of the most respected and trusted names in the optics industry, delivering high-quality products tailored to the needs of target shooters, hunters and outdoor enthusiasts.

Benefits of range-finding binoculars

The latest in a long and comprehensive line of optical products released by Leupold is the BX-4 Range HD Gen 2 12x50 binoculars. Designed for hunters, these binoculars incorporate a laser range finder into a mid-

magnification binocular. Apart from eliminating a second optic, range finding binoculars enable operators to precisely measure the intended target's range and inclination without taking their eyes off it. This is a key attribute for hunters, because the ability to go straight from the binos to shouldering the rifle saves precious seconds. And when your target hog, buck or bull is swiftly slipping into cover, those few seconds may make all the difference. Furthermore, 12x is a greater magnification than standard rangefinders, and the BX-4 Range HD can be tripod mounted via an adapter port at the forward end of the hinge, thus enabling precise ranging at extreme distances. The BX-4 Range HD in 12x50 is therefore superb for open-country hunting or long-range observation.

LEUPOLD BX-4 RANGE HD GEN2 12X50 BINOCULARS

12x50 BX-4 Range HD Gen 2: external features

Leupold BX-4 Range HDs come with a comprehensive set of accessories, including a padded carrying case and harness, lens covers, three sets of interchangeable eyecups, lens cloth, and a battery cover removal tool. Also included is an all-inclusive Operator's Manual and a Quick Reference Card, which are both pocket-sized and thus convenient to carry and access in the field.

For those who have not experienced range finding binoculars before, the first thing you'll notice is the weight. However, a set of binoculars plus a separate rangefinder weigh at least as much, or more than a set of range finding binoculars but take up more space.

Speaking of space, the next thing you'll notice about these binos is their size and feel. Considering the magnification, the optical quality and the technological features built into them, the 12x50 BX-4 Range HDs are comparatively compact. This, combined with their ergonomic design, alleviates any perceived weightiness during use. Moreover, the carrying case and harness enable users to carry the binoculars comfortably and securely, while allowing easy and speedy access to them. The carrying case has external storage on each side and on the front, which could be used to house the lens covers, spare eyecups, the Quick Reference Card and/or other small accessories.

Like other BX-4 binoculars, the 12x50 Range HDs have an open bridge design. This allows users to find the right interpupillary distance quickly and easily, and the centre focus dial is placed so your index fingers



BX-4 Range HD Gen 2 binoculars come with a padded carrying case and harness, lens covers, interchangeable eyecups, microfiber cleaning cloth, battery cover removal tool, Operator's Manual and a Quick Reference Card.

The BX-4 Range HD 12x50 carrying case and harness provide security, comfort, and quick access to the binos, as well as handy storage for accessories.



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Everyone who tried out the 12x50 BX-4 Range HD binos found the ergonomics excellent and basic controls easy to manipulate.

rest on it naturally. There is also an adjustable dioptre wheel for each eye.

As mentioned, three sets of eyecups are provided. The winged eyecups are recommended for blocking out stray light; the medium eyecups for all round comfort, and the low eyecups are for use with glasses. The eyecups are easily interchanged, and I found the medium ones to be most suited to my requirements.

The binoculars' electronics are powered by a standard CR2 battery, which is loaded into the rear end of the centre focus wheel and is rated for 4,000-plus actuations. Only two buttons, one on top of each barrel, are required to operate the electronics. These buttons are the only textured items on the otherwise smooth bridge, so they are easy to find without taking your eyes off the target. They are also easily re-programmed to accommodate right or left-handed operators.

To see what others thought of the 12x50s' ergonomics, I gave them to some friends to try out. My impromptu testers ranged from having no experience with binoculars at all, to past and current binocular users. Everyone who tried the binos found the controls easy to manipulate and they were all marvelling at the clarity of distant objects at 12x magnification in a matter of seconds.

12x50 BX-4 Range HD: internal features

BX-4 Range HD binos feature Leupold's advanced internal gases and sealing methods, which provide waterproof/fog proof integrity in all environments.

BX-4 Range HD Gen2 12x50	
True Ballistic Range/Wind (TBR/W)	Yes
Inclinometer	Yes
Scan Mode	Yes
Compass	No
Line of D-Sight Distance (LOS)	Yes
Yards/Meters Mode	Yes
Bright Red OLED Display	Yes
Last Target	Yes
Battery Status Indicator	Yes
Battery Life	>4,000 actuations
Dimensions (inches)	6.3x2.7x5.3 (L x H x W)
Weight (with battery installed)	39 ounces
Warranty (optics/electronics)	Lifetime/2 years
Waterproof	Yes

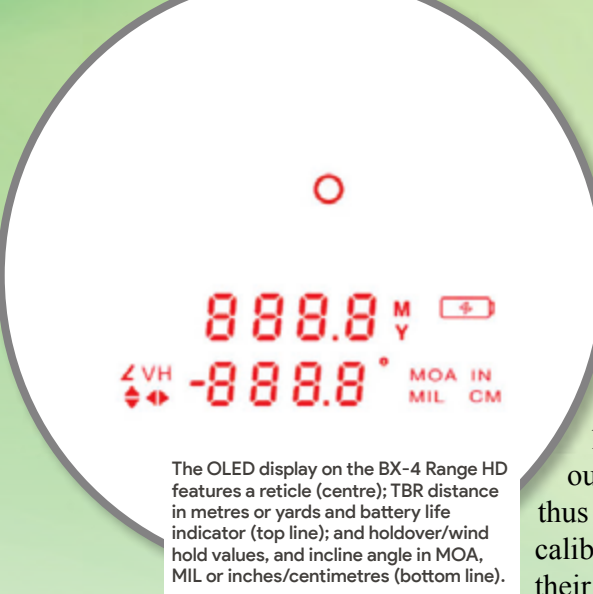
Typical Maximum Ranges		
	YARDS	METRES
Reflective Targets	4,000	3,657
Trees	2,200	2,012
Deer	1,400	1,189

And Leupold's Elite Optical System incorporates lens coatings that deliver excellent dawn-to-dusk light transmission, elite-level glare reduction in harsh light, and smudge-resistance to prevent dust and debris from interfering with image quality.

Moving to the electronics, the BX-4 Range HD Gen 2 has state-of-the-art programming designed to accommodate the needs of rifle shooters, archers and outdoor enthusiasts. Covering each of these features in depth would take several pages, so the following is a brief overview of the main features.

The BX-4 Range HD 12x50 features Leupold's proprietary DNA range finding engine and True Ballistic Range/Wind (TBR/W) ballistic programming. The Gen 2 12x50s enable users to range reflective objects out to 4,000 yards, trees out to 2,200 yards and deer out to 1,400 yards. Accuracy is +/- 0.5-yards/meters under 125 yards/meters and +/- 2-yards/meters at longer ranges.

The rifle-specific TBR/W technology calculates bullet weight and velocity to output aiming solutions for a variety of loads and conditions. The TBR/W



The OLED display on the BX-4 Range HD features a reticle (centre); TBR distance in metres or yards and battery life indicator (top line); and holdover/wind hold values, and incline angle in MOA, MIL or inches/centimetres (bottom line).

For archery enthusiasts, the BX-4 Range HD binoculars furnish BOW mode; archery-specific software that considers arrow weight, arrow velocity and peep height to calculate accurate archery parabolas.

12x50 BX-4 Range HD: performance

I used the new binoculars in observation and ranging mode in a variety of locations in low to bright light conditions and found the glass quality to be outstanding, delivering sharp, clear, edge-to-edge images even in near-dark conditions.

The rangefinder is fast and precise. To range a target, you simply press the right button on the binos and the red OLED display appears. The display has a circular reticle in the centre and two readouts below it. Hold the reticle on the target, press the right button again and the range will appear on the top readout. The lower readout gives the required elevation and windage adjustment in MIL, inches/centimetres or MOA, enabling rapid scope adjustments.

The furthest object I ranged was 760 yards away and required 23 MOA of elevation and 7.3 MOA of windage if I

programming incorporates 25 different ballistic groups, which accommodate 200- and 300-yard zeros and facilitate 10mph wind holds out to 800 yards, thus enabling users to calibrate their binos to their specific load.



BX-4 Range HD Gen 2 12x50 binoculars are the latest in a long and comprehensive line of optical products released by Leupold.

LEUPOLD BX-4 RANGE HD GEN2 12X50 BINOCULARS

wished to shoot it. This reading was easily obtained by placing my elbows on my car roof to hold the binos steady. Extreme precision ranging from a tripod is thus eminently possible.

The minimum ranging distance is listed as 12 yards, but I managed to get down to eight yards consistently, including one reading on my TV set from the kitchen. Precise readings are, however, of little use, if they are difficult to see in poor light or contrasting backgrounds. The high-contrast red OLED display delivered easy-to-see readouts in all light conditions and against a variety of backgrounds, including tree-covered hills, housing development sites, suburban streets and parks, and a coastal wetland.

12x50 BX-4 Range HD: who should consider this bino?

The Gen 2 12x50 BX-4 Range HD binoculars are ideal for hunters, shooters, and wildlife enthusiasts who value quick target acquisition and accurate ballistic information without the need to carry multiple devices. These binos would be particularly beneficial for those who hunt somewhere that requires serious glassing capability, like mountain goat or sheep hunting. The speed at which you can simultaneously glass and range is very helpful on solo hunts, but also when spotting for another hunter, because you can glass and call the range without taking your eyes off the target. Professional hunters and guides would find the BX-4 Range HD 12x50 binocular indispensable, as it provides a range of target solutions to accommodate most hunters' cartridge choices, at the touch of a button.

Conclusion

In 1907 Fred Leupold made a promise that guides Leupold's philosophy to this day: "The customer is entitled to a square deal." The BX-4 Range HD Gen 2 12x50 binoculars sell for around \$4,000, give or take. This is good value, considering their exceptional optical performance, advanced range finding capabilities and rugged reliability alone. But when you add in Leupold's lifetime warranty on the optics and two-year electronics guarantee, their BX-4 Range HD Gen 2 12x50s really are the ultimate all-in-one hunting binoculars. 🍷

SAVIOURS OF THE LAMBS



The humble .22LR has possibly accounted for more foxes for recreational shooters in Australia than any other cartridge.

By Neil Schultz

European red foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*) were introduced in Australia via nine recorded shipments arriving between 1845 and 1879. Those initial animals were released in Victoria around Geelong and further north near Ballarat. Even before the latter imports, foxes were in great numbers in the wild around the greater Melbourne area. By 1905 they had made their way west into South Australia and just two years later were recorded as far north as southern Queensland. By the 1930s foxes had populated around 80 per cent of mainland Australia, a range they still occupy today.

It is pure chance that the area most suited to supporting dense fox populations is also where the majority of our sheep grazing occurs. That unhappy coincidence has foxes preying upon newborn lambs wherever the two converge.

Lamb mortality rates due to fox predation range from 5.3 per cent to a recorded high of 32 per cent in South West Queensland from 1976-85 (Jordan et al. 1989). An estimated national average of around 7 per cent would equate to one in every 14 lambs born each year taken by foxes. With current fat lamb prices at record highs, that is a significant portion of the graziers' profit margin vanishing.

Thinning fox numbers prior to lambing has become a necessary part of farm management. Baiting with

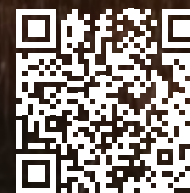
1080 is the most widespread method of fox control but poses risks to domestic dogs and may result in secondary poisoning of native scavengers, but the jury is still out on that. Trapping is a very specialised method that is time consuming and not overly effective on older, wiser foxes. This method definitely has detrimental effects on native animals, with goannas, quolls and possums particularly susceptible. Shooting is the only 100 per cent species-specific method of control. Scores of contract shooters make a fulltime living from the occupation. Commercial shooting, however, adds another expense to the farmers' outgoing finances. Recreational shooters take on the task of filling the gap between baiting, trapping and commercial shooting at no cost to the grazier.

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Whistling

Calling foxes into shooting range during daylight hours is undoubtedly the most satisfying and visually exciting method of fox hunting. Most effective in areas where rabbits are present in reasonable numbers, it can also be frustrating. Whistles range from the old familiar metal button style, through to a plethora of metal, plastic and rubber mouth callers all designed to replicate the distress sounds of a small animal.

‘Tenterfield’ style whistles have been popular for decades, consisting of a folded metal plate with two holes. These can take some practice to produce the desired sound (or any sound). High-tech electronic callers are available with the ability to switch between a library of different animal and bird sounds. Spring and early summer are generally accepted as the best times of year for bringing foxes to the whistle.

Shooters set up with cover behind

them to disguise their outline while not obscuring their view. A spot with a little elevation is ideal to give a good range of visibility. Hillsides in grazing country overlooking bushy gullies, log piles and blackberry thickets can be quite productive. Whistling in ten-second bursts, with a minute between, is enough to grab a fox’s attention. About 15 or 20 minutes in each location is all that is needed to bring any resident foxes into the open.

Foxes threaten not only livestock, but also birds like the red-backed wren, plus small mammals, reptiles and amphibians.



“Shooting is the only 100 per cent species-specific method of control.”

An accurate bolt action rifle and a thermal scope are the gear of choice for both recreational and commercial fox shooters.

Spotlighting

Shooting foxes at night with the aid of a spotlight has been the mainstay of farmers and hunters for the past 75 years. Lights are usually vehicle mounted or handheld while in a vehicle. The method involves driving around paddocks looking for the telltale eye-shine of the target species. Foxes’ eyes reflect yellow to golden light, depending on the individual’s age. Most herbivores, sheep, cattle, deer, etc, give off a blue or white eye-shine, making quick ID possible. Small calibre centre fire rifles excel for spotlighting. From the ‘50s, the .222 was the centre-fire cartridge of choice for fox shooters around the globe prior to the widespread availability of the .223 Remington. The .223 is now the most popular

centre-fire cartridge in the western world and very widely used for spotlighting foxes here in Australia. Quartz-halogen (QH) spotlights are preferred, as the warmer light they produce is less harsh than LED or HID. Foxes are less likely to spook from QH for that reason. Even when using a QH light it is

advisable to shine the beam to the side of a fox, lighting it with the edge of the visible beam while lining up for the shot. If you need more light for a clear view of the crosshairs, move the spot onto the fox when you are ready to take the shot.



The .223 Rem, loaded with a 55gr Rexem R-Bomb makes an ideal sleeping pill for foxes.



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Whatever rifle is in hand, is a good fox gun. Here the .44 Magnum took down a fox flushed from cover while looking for pigs.

Thermal - game changing

Thermal imaging equipment has become more commonly used by nocturnal hunters during the past decade. Dedicated thermal riflescopes are no longer prohibitively expensive, putting them within reach of everyday 'mum and dad' recreational shooters and farmers. The advantages of locating and shooting foxes in complete darkness are momentous. Unlike spotlighting, the fox is completely unaware of the hunter's presence and can often be approached to within close range. Shooters can observe the fox moving about and wait for that unhurried, perfect shot to be presented. We'll often use a whistle while thermal hunting, just to get a fox to stop and look to allow a stationary shot. Just like spotlighting, vehicle-borne hunters patrol paddocks looking for their quarry. The range at which foxes can be detected in open fields is considerable, in excess of half a kilometre with mid-priced thermal gear. Positively identifying them at that distance can be challenging, but moving closer undetected is usually easy. One of my favourite nocturnal hunting strategies is to sit at a dam and wait for feral beasts to come to me. Foxes regularly visit dams, not just to drink but to hunt small animals that do come for water. They also patrol looking for wild ducklings, turtles and frogs. A conservative estimate of my shooting team's increase in fox tallies with the use of thermal over spotlight would be 100 per cent (probably closer to 200).

Which rifle?

As previously mentioned, the .223 is the most commonly used centre-fire cartridge for fox shooting here in Australia. Loaded with projectiles as light as 30gr right through to 80gr, the .223 is a very versatile

cartridge. Most shooters use a 55gr bullet and I follow that habit. I hand-load with Australian-made Rexem 55gr 'R-Bomb' projectiles that provide target accuracy with devastating terminal performance on foxes. At the small end of the scale, the very popular .22LR rimfire is a great close range fox rifle and practically every rural farmhouse has one in the safe. Small calibre hot-rods are ideal for foxes, with the 17HMR a great performer. Less common is the .204 Ruger cartridge, a brilliantly flat shooting and inherently accurate round. The venerable .22-250 is also fast and flat shooting and perfect for reaching out to longer ranges for foxes. Running a 50-grain projectile at 3,800fps makes this cartridge a fox's nightmare. Some of the newer .224 calibre cartridges are perfect fox medicine. I currently have a favourite rifle being re-barrelled in .22GT for foxes and pigs, but that's a story for another day.

Make a difference

Red tape addicts and bureaucrats often state that recreational hunting is ineffective in fox control. They quote statistics that even with bounties, shooters don't take a great enough percentage of the population to affect a long-term decrease in their numbers. (What is that old saying about lies, damn lies and statistics?) Logic would indicate that every fox taken out of the environment by recreational shooters is one less out there killing lambs and native wildlife for the duration of its lifetime. One less in the breeding population has knock-on effects, too. How many cubs does a vixen produce each year? Do your local poultry and lamb farmer and your region's wildlife a favour and take down those foxes. 🐾

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Never-ending for Queensland landowners

By Rachael Oxborrow

Land and managers in Queensland actively controlling feral pig populations are winning the fight on their own properties but are overall losing the war as the state’s overall feral pig population continues to rise.

Darling Downs grain producer Brendan Taylor goes hunting several nights a week on his own property and surrounds, with permission of his neighbours, and believes for many, the problem is too large to handle alone.

“There’s big numbers of pigs everywhere in Queensland at the moment, even in the areas where there’s a lot of active control measures in place, whether that’s baiting, trapping, shooting, or a

combination of the whole lot,” he said.

Brendan puts his success in managing local populations down to hunting on foot with the use of tripods and thermal optics, both binoculars and rifle-mounted scopes, but also through sharing the costs of a coordinated annual aerial cull.

“Hunting for me is a hobby and a passion, but I’m out probably more nights than I should be wandering around the countryside,” he said.

“It’s like we’re winning the battle, but we’re losing the war because they just keep on going, even with lots of areas doing coordinated aerial shoots where you might reduce the population by 80 or 90 per cent.

“At the time you think, well, that’s good, and look, it does help but within probably eight to 12 months, they just move in from the few that you might miss breeding up, or they come in from surrounding areas.

“So wherever the external boundary is for that coordinated area, they just filter in from the sides and they just breed quicker than we can cull them.

“I think that’s the problem everybody’s having.”

Queensland’s feral pig population was estimated at 2.3 million in 2021, and it is widely accepted that numbers are much higher today. This growing problem nationally has prompted the Commonwealth, state and territory governments to

collaborative with the agricultural sector, environmental bodies and local communities to commit to reducing the impacts of feral pigs in Australia via the National Feral Pig Action Plan.

The federal Department of Agriculture estimated feral pigs already cost the farm sector more than \$156 million per year in management and losses.

Brendan said costs for landowners individually were ongoing and significant, and there is no end in sight.

“Everyone right at the moment is just like, where are these pigs coming from?” he said.

“You know, there’s more than me around the place, actively out there



Feral pigs build nests in paddocks left in fallow to retain soil moisture and nutrients, disturbing soil, uprooting stubble and creating long-term management issues.

doing our bit to control them and while we’ve had a chopper shoot maybe eight months ago, the pigs just keep coming.

“They just keep turning up.”

Brendan runs a cropping operation that rotates between summer and winter crops and while

feral pigs cause damage to standing crops, the bulk of the damage done is either in-between crops or when crops are yet to have significant growth.

“They’ll build nests in our fallows and have their pigs in there, and right now, we’ve got a lot of

READY, AIM, HOLIDAY!

INTERNATIONAL OVERSEAS SHOOT - NO PASSPORT REQUIRED!

The 2025 Norfolk Island Pistol Championships are set for December and offer the perfect mix of competition and island escape. Open to all registered pistol club and association members, events include Standard, Air, Sport (men’s and ladies), Centrefire and 50m Pistol.

Hosted by the friendly Norfolk Island Pistol Association on a stunning clifftop range, this mid-ditch meet draws shooters from Australia, New Zealand and Norfolk for a week of sport and social fun.

Holiday packages from \$2199pp twin share ex Sydney (5–12 Dec) and



The Norfolk Pistol Club welcomes you to friendly competition and adventure.

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Call Norfolk Island Travel Centre on 1800 1400 66 or email sales@nittravelcentre.com to book your place today. See norfolkislandtravelcentre.com for more information.

Ts & Cs apply: Prices are a guide only, subject to change and availability, and are in Australian Dollars. Prices are correct as of 15 May 2025. Please check all prices, availability, fees, conditions and information with your travel agent before booking.

Deposit: A non-refundable deposit is due upon booking. Airfare may be required at time of booking to commit to Qantas booking terms and conditions. Final Payment: Final payment is due: 19 September 2025. Payment can be made by personal or bank cheques or by direct deposit into our Commonwealth Bank account. If you would prefer to pay by Visa or Mastercard, please add 1.5% to the total cost of your holiday package. Changes & Amendments: Changes can be made up to 48 hours (notification business days only) prior to departure at a change fee of \$200 per person plus any applicable upgrade fees, subject to availability. Cancellation: Airfare is subject to availability and non-refundable after issue. Accommodation cancellation penalties apply within 90 days prior to travel. Within 60 days of travel, up to 100% cancellation fees may apply. We strongly recommend travel insurance to protect you against some unforeseen cancellations. Quote: NIEV273219

mice and they're digging big holes looking for mice," he said.

"There seems to be a lot of effort to go to for not much reward when you think what you're likely to get out of a mouse nest is maybe four or six little tiny mice, particularly when you're a big, feral pig."

Depending on the amount of damage caused, landowners may have to plough paddocks to level out the damage and in some cases, fill in large holes.

"I've shot a lot of pigs I've found while driving the header over the years where you're disturbing them during harvest."



Darling Downs grain producer Brendan Taylor says Queensland landowners are winning the local fight but overall, the war against feral pigs is overrunning population management capabilities. Photo courtesy of AgForce Queensland.

Hunting has always been a part of Brendan's life, having grown up on a property, but he also dabbled in clay target shooting for more than a decade before having children. Now that keeping a decent level of feral pig control on his property takes a lot of time, Brendan's

focus is solely on hunting and his investments in thermal optics have gone a long way to assisting him in the job.

"More and more people are getting into using thermal optics while hunting and this has made a huge difference from my end," he said.

"I've shot more pigs in the last two years having this thermal technology, than I've probably shot in the last five years prior to that combined.

"You can quickly just go out, have a look around the farm and while obviously pigs move around, you can take a better look and make a decision on whether to head out that night.

"We're not farming hundreds of thousands of acres either, but you just blast the paddocks with your thermal and if they're there, they're there.

"But that doesn't mean to say they mightn't turn up from somewhere down the road or from



Thermal optics have allowed Brendan Taylor to be more effective in his feral pig control methods.



Feral pig monitoring and hunting in the evenings is a regular activity for Brendan Taylor as a landowner in Queensland's Darling Downs region.

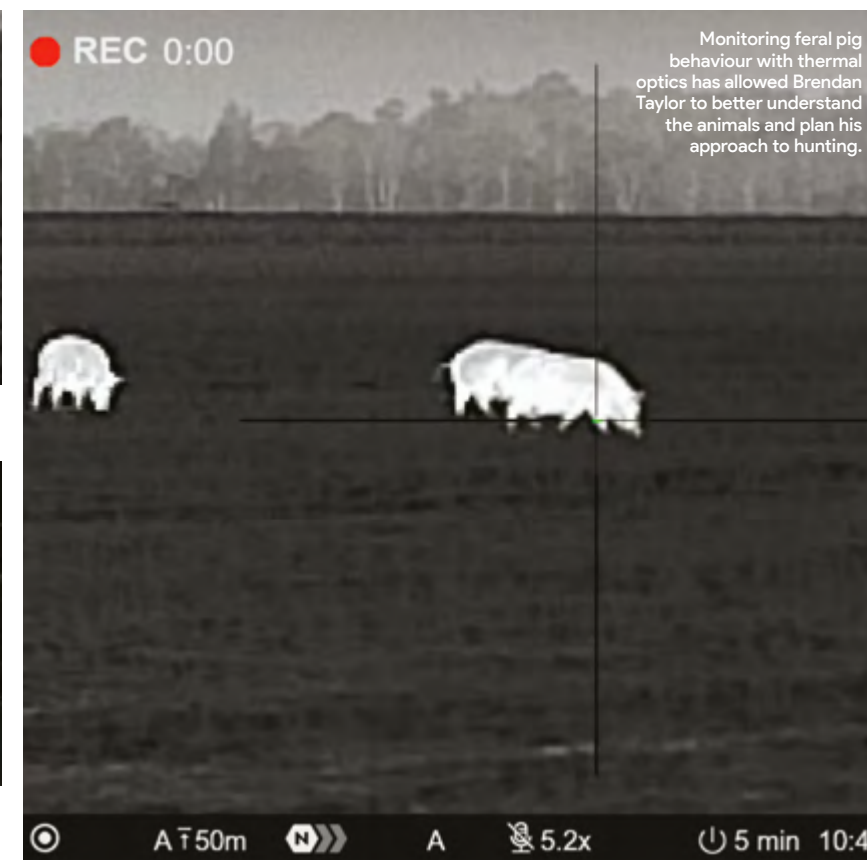
a neighbour's property after you've had a look.

"We generally don't see massive numbers as in mobs of pigs around here, you generally just sort of see the family bloody unit of a couple of sows and a boar and the litters if they've got their pigs running around together.

"Whereas some of the less populated areas, or warmer remote areas, would see mobs of 50 or more pigs getting around together."

Over time, Brendan has been able to learn more about the way feral pigs behave by observing them through thermal optics and by speaking with other hunters. He said it was a smart style of hunting with a lot of planning and thought involved.

"When you can see them and they can't see you, then you have a chance," he said.



"These days for me, hunting involves a lot of walking and when I can see pigs 1,500 to 2,000 metres away, you can work out where the wind is and where they would move towards for cover after your first shot.

"I have to consider whether there is there a road, or a track that I can use to get a little bit closer to them without potentially disturbing them. "From there you've got to hatch a plan out, which generally involves walking a fair way.

Brendan said there are times you can fluke being in the right place at the right time and have one travelling towards you and the wind is right, but often you're watching them from 500 metres away and having to make a call on what is next.

"Before thermal, I was hunting by spotlights, either roof mounted or

handheld, or just chance encounters in daylight while using machinery," he said.

"I've shot a lot of pigs I've found while driving the header over the years where you're disturbing them during harvest."

In Queensland, the parks and wildlife services manage protected national parks and state forests across more than 13 million hectares of land. Landowners are required to manage feral pigs on their own land and are encouraged to report feral pig numbers more consistently to provide accurate data that can support government funding and planning.

SSAA Queensland volunteers across the state to assist landowners, state and local governments and natural resource and conservation organisations with animal management. 📍

Great Australian OUTDOORS

DISCOVER QUEENSLAND'S BACKYARD



The path to Zillie Falls.

Here are just a few of the Queensland highlights from the latest edition, issue 5, with places that are not only worth a visit, but also conveniently in our own backyard.

Atherton Tablelands – A Wilderness Wonderland

From waterfalls and wildlife to fresh local produce, a visit to this North Queensland hotspot promises adventure at every turn. Located about 90km from Cairns, the region covers roughly 65,000km² of lush, mountainous terrain, including parts of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

It's one of the most biodiverse regions in the country, home to animals and plants not found anywhere else on Earth. David Attenborough even called it “one of the world's greatest birding hotspots”.

One standout is the *Waterfall Circuit* - a trio of stunning waterfalls (12m, 15m, and 18m high) linked by a scenic trail. Then there's Lake Eacham, a crater lake formed by volcanic activity over 9,000 years ago. With no streams entering or leaving, it remains calm and is perfect for kayaking or canoeing – motorboats are not allowed.

After soaking in nature, ease back into civilisation at the Innot Hot Springs, followed by a visit to the Ravenshoe Hotel, the highest hotel in Queensland. The magazine dives deeper into the Tablelands too, with more on wilderness experiences, scenic flights, unique stays, and even geode smashing.

We've mentioned the latest issue of *Great Australian Outdoors* (GAO) magazine a few times now — and for good reason.

It's packed with fantastic places to visit, including some truly standout spots right here in Queensland. The magazine celebrates Australia's unique flora and fauna and shines a light on the people and places that make our country so special. The magazine also helps explain to the general public the conservation work our shooters do in the field, removing pest animals, as well as one of the main reasons we hunt – to put food on the table for our family. The media team that now work for SSAA Queensland first produced the first edition of the *Great Australian Outdoors* in 2019. It won multiple international media awards with Tim Bannister as the Chief Editor, who, alongside Jennifer Martens, is Co-Managing Editor of the *The Report*.

Incredible waterfalls - getting as high as 18 metres.



Native waterweed covers the surface of the water within the crater.



How you figure out where to go in Charlotte Plains.



Soaking it up!

Charlotte Plains – Great Getaway

What could be more relaxing than diving out of bed and straight into an outdoor deep artesian bore water bath? Charlotte Plains is a family-run sheep and cattle station about 750km west of Brisbane and is one of the most relaxing getaways you'll find.

The 42oC, mineral-rich, 'magic' water is made for soaking and recharging your batteries. The property has unpowered camping, as well as self-contained and air-conditioned accommodation. You can book a private bathing session or share and soak alongside others. There's plenty more to do out there as well, which is explained in the magazine.

Cobb & Co – Historical Stagecoach Route

On 14 August 1924, the last official Cobb & Co mail run in Australia travelled between Surat and Yuleba in South West Queensland. Today, you can retrace that journey yourself - a pretty unique way to explore a bit of outback history.

Along the route you'll find rich heritage and local landmarks that tell the story of this pioneering era. And if you're lucky (and patient), the area hosts a festival every five years to celebrate the famous stagecoach run.

The replica 'Tommy Thompson' in Surat.



Adventure Awaits

The latest edition of *Great Australian Outdoors* is full of invigorating destinations for all walks of life. From hiking, fishing and camping to 4WDing, boating and cooking, it's a celebration of everything that makes the Aussie outdoors so rewarding. You'll also find features on how to protect and preserve our natural wonders for future generations.

You can grab the latest issue from SSAA Inc's website and online shop at ssaa.org.au or head to the *Sunset Gallery* on pages 66–67 for your chance to win a copy for free! The magazine also has its own website at greataustralianoutdoors.com.au ©



Charlotte Plains
- Predawn baths for maximum relaxation.

CONFIDENCE without the KICK

Why the 28g is an ideal starter for juniors and women

By Liz Rymill

Every so often, the request for suitable junior and women's shotgun recommendations arises around gun clubs and on social media forums. Makers aside, most contributors offer the 20 gauge or a 'light' 12 gauge as a preferred option.

When I started clay and field shooting 15 years ago, I embarked on both courses but now find myself championing another option to the many women and juniors I coach and introduce to shotgun shooting.

Before I introduce the 'dark horse', an important word on gun fit. When selecting a shotgun, it is not gauge, action type or brand that should be of first importance – it's fit. For a shotgun to shoot where you are looking, it must fit you properly. Off-the-shelf shotguns are made to fit the 'average' male who is between about 5'10" and 6 feet tall, of medium build. The dimensions, especially length of pull, are designed with this shooter in mind – and if this doesn't sound like you, then some level of customisation is required no matter what your intended target.

The dark horse that won't kick

While there is much to like about the 20 gauge, and merit to a good (but not light) 12 gauge, there is a dark horse worthy of consideration for the junior and female shooter embarking on clay target shooting (as well as for the older shot or those with shoulder injuries), especially in the disciplines of skeet and sporting clays.

The 28 gauge is my pick beyond the traditional two-horse race. With virtually no felt recoil, an effective pattern (I'll explain) and finer dimensions for improved fit and handling, the 28 gauge is worthy of consideration.

Let's start with recoil. Felt recoil depends on several factors, including overall gun weight, payload of shot, powder charge and action – for example.

It's widely agreed that a semi-automatic shotgun has less felt recoil than its comparable over/under counterpart.

US firearms trainer and broadcaster Jim Harmer notes the average 12-gauge shotgun load produces 40-60 per cent more recoil than a 20-gauge shotgun if all else is equal.

"The semi-auto shotgun feels like a longer push rather than a sharp jab," Jim adds, "while the 28 gauge has 'virtually no' felt recoil at all."

Having shot 12, 20 and 28 gauges in skeet, sporting clays and while game bird and waterfowl hunting interstate, game loads do influence felt recoil in all but the 28g – where recoil remains negligible. Target load selection is important in reducing recoil for 12 and 20 gauges. Reducing recoil ought to be high on the list of requisites for junior and female shooters for the simple fact that comfort and confidence (from being able to execute shots without developing a flinch or hesitation, often linked to excessive felt recoil) equal longevity in the sport; and, to this end, the 28 gauge is a standout both on the range and in the field.

The perfect fit

Building on the theme of shooter comfort is gun fit and dynamics. The dimensions of an 'average' 12 gauge, as discussed above, are designed for an 'average' adult male. The dimensions of a 28 gauge, however, are markedly different. Narrower and scaled down through the grip, throat and action, the 28 gauge is a smaller-framed gun that meets a natural partner in the hands of junior and teenage shooters - and many women.

I own a 28g Yildiz sporter that I've introduced to shooters as young as 10 and women who have never shot before or shooters who are nervous but interested in learning to shoot shotguns. Being able to handle the gun's weight and dimensions with ease brings an immediate lift in confidence and capacity to learn the basics of shotgun shooting.

The same qualities apply to the 20 gauge (as long as the gun is not too light; I prefer 30" barrels in a 20g), but a conundrum presents with the 12g. Often women and juniors are offered a 'light weight' 12g as a learner gun, with lightness achieved from either a shorter barrel or a lower quality wood. But this is a misnomer because felt recoil immediately rises with such a gun, and a sharp kick in the shoulder and cheek is the result for the unfortunate shooter.

Compared to the 12ga, the 20 and the 28 gauges may be reduced in size, but they're more than enough for most clay target and mid-range field shooting.

A pattern that performs

Ammunition companies in England were creating 28-gauge shotshells as far back as 1857, and according to author and shotgunning expert Bob Brister, perhaps where the 28 gauge performs best is shot string. Shot string is how many pellets arrive at a target simultaneously.

Over decades of studies and testing, Brister maintained the 28 gauge "always did better than it should have."

He was devoted when it came to the 28 gauge and it was shot string that was the final evidence Brister needed to make a case: "The 28 gauge hit the pattern board so hard it jarred out one of the thumbtacks holding the paper," Brister explained.

In the field or on the sporting layout, most shots are taken within 40 metres, but in Skeet, that reduces to around 20 metres. Under these conditions, and indeed in real-world application, I'm yet to encounter a target or game bird where the 20 will seriously outperform the 28.

Backing the outsider

The cost of ammunition has risen sharply in the past five years, and while sub-gauge ammunition price and availability has previously been an impediment to choosing the 28 gauge, the differences between 12, 20 and 28 are now negligible. Furthermore, makers such as Miroku and Beretta offer quality 28-gauge shotguns at moderate price points with plenty of second-hand options readily available, but rising rapidly in popularity are the cheap-and-cheerful offerings of Yildiz, which – through testing in the field and on the range – is more than adequate for the job at hand and come in at sub \$1000.

So, next time you're gazing at gun racks in your local gun shop, don't overlook the mighty 28 gauge. 🍀

Ten-year-old Robert feels confident with his 28g sporter while learning skeet and sporting clays.

SSAA Queensland on the LIFEblood LEADERBOARD

By Sam Talbot

Supporting shooters and blood donors might seem an unlikely match, yet SSAA Queensland members have quietly become some of Lifeblood's (a division of the Red Cross Society) most reliable supporters. For years, the SSAA has been a well-represented group, but lately it has been hovering right near the top of the 'Lifeblood Teams' ladder in Ipswich.

There are no prizes of course, but the friendly competition tracks how many donations each registered club, business or community group makes. A big part of that success comes from Ken Payne, who many people know through his years of conservation and pest control work with the SSAA. As regular as clockwork, Ken gives plasma every fortnight at the Ipswich Donor Centre.

Many years ago, when Ken first spotted that SSAA wasn't listed on the team board at his local centre, he asked staff to add it. Since then, he has been encouraging other shooters and non-shooters to also donate. His grassroots' recruiting

drive has pushed the SSAA team at Ipswich as high as third place locally - a display of the amazing things SSAA members are capable of when we work together.

Right now - just like almost any other time - is a great time to donate. National red-cell stocks have been dipping into the 'amber' zone, with some blood types only days from the minimum safety threshold. Lifeblood is always keen to get more donations, and we are always keen to show the incredible generosity of SSAA members to the public. The leaderboard is a great way to do this, and we think we

could be doing even more or even get on top of the leaderboards.

Whether it's a seasoned shooter, a family member or just a mate tagging along, we want you to donate if you can and help us lift the SSAA tally. Make sure you find the SSAA team when you donate and register to the team, so your donation counts towards our total. If the spirit of competition isn't enough for you, of course, you'll also be keeping Australia's hospitals stocked and saving lives.

As Ken says, "It's the easiest competition we'll ever win, and the stakes are literally life and death."

Our donations from the start of the year to early July in Queensland

BLOOD What you might think when you first hear 'blood donation'. This is the fastest and most straightforward option and it can be done in as little as 10 minutes.

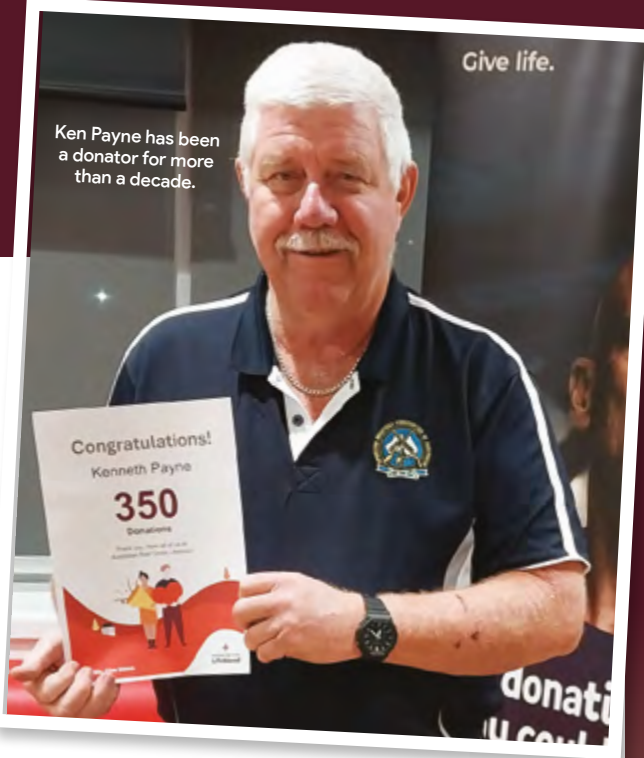
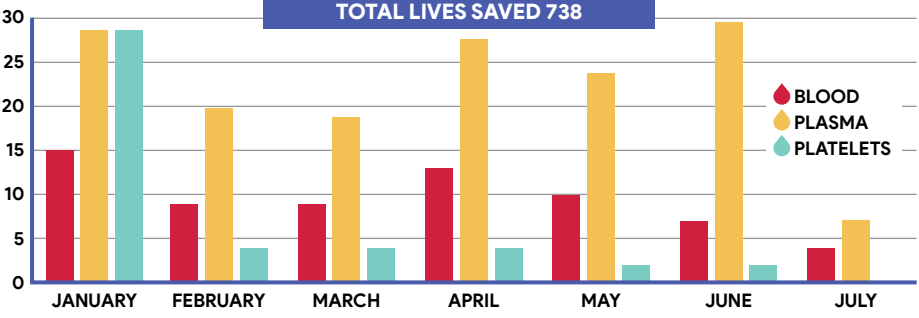
QLD 67

PLASMA Over half of your blood is actually a liquid called plasma and by donating it you can help in 18 different life-giving ways - from treating serious burns to cancer.

QLD 157

PLATELETS Platelets are tiny fragments of cells that clump together to stop bleeding, and seal wounds. It's very valuable, but to donate, you must be male and have given plasma before.

QLD 22



Ken Payne has been a donor for more than a decade.

Give life.

SSAA CABOOLTURE

A leader in safe, responsible, and community-focused shooting sports

North of Brisbane, the SSAA Caboolture Branch (Q51) is the meeting ground for nearly 930 sporting shooters – and has been a shooting oasis since its formation in 1994. Its pistol club is growing quickly too and boasts about 350 members. Female membership is strong at just more than 100 and junior numbers are starting to climb at nearly 30.

The Branch is extremely welcoming and says its goal is to support shooters through their "journey to achieve the enjoyment and comradeship that we experience at every meet". Well-trained and friendly Range Offices are always available to help assist with safety procedures and members are always available to answer questions.

SSAA Caboolture President Jeff Ross says, "SSAA Caboolture continues to lead the way in safe, responsible, and community-focused shooting sports. Our club provides a welcoming environment for new and experienced members alike, offering high-quality facilities, regular competitions, and a strong commitment to firearms safety and education."

In March of 2025, the Branch received a Community Facilities Grant from the City of Moreton Bay Council. The much-appreciated financial support allowed for a planning project including:

- Design of a new 50m indoor pistol range
- Design of a new roof over its existing 50m range.

The Branch says, the "project was a great outcome and only possible due to the contribution from Council".

Improvement work has since been undertaken, with two of three stages complete. Stage 1 included a 25m range catering to pistol chamberings, with the



The indoor ranges at Caboolture allow shooting fun in any weather.

website pointing out, "The range approval conditions dictate muzzle velocity of black powder and centre fire ammunition not to exceed 1400 feet per second and rimfire ammunition not to exceed 1710 feet per second." Only lead projectiles are allowed (no ball or jacketed ammunition).

Stage 2 saw two 50m ranges completed. The 50-metre ranges accommodate pistol and rifle chamberings. Its enclosed nature means the Range Officer can limit shooting anything above .223 at any time.

Competitions are held monthly and include .22LR Pistol and .22LR Rifle, Black Powder, Western Action, Rapid Fire Pistol, .22 Rimfire, Sports Pistol, Three Stage Pistol, Air Pistol and a Pistol Mystery Practical Shoot.

Membership categories include Adult, Pensioner, Additional Family Member and Junior, with fees ranging between \$50 to \$250 per year.

When in the area, be sure to pay the popular club a visit. If you are passing by without your firearms, the Branch has some for hire. You can find them at 558 Uhlmann Rd, Burpengary, next to the Caboolture Clay Target Club. And you can find out about events and shooting times by visiting the Events section of the website: ssaacaboolture.com/events/

Be sure to bring photo ID and, of course, enclosed shoes.



FIREARMS SAFETY IN THE FIELD

It's **your** responsibility

On the range, firearms safety is made easy with the help of trained range officers and other responsible shooters, but when we are in the field, often it is up to us alone to ensure that we, and our hunting party, leave the bush in the same condition we arrived. Mistakes happen, but we can minimise them if we follow the rules and do not become complacent.

As shooters, we need to fully understand a firearm's three states of readiness, which are:

1. **Unloaded** – Your magazine is empty and there is no round in the chamber. Ideally your bolt and magazine are removed.
2. **Loaded** – You have one or more cartridge in the magazine/breech.
3. **Ready to fire** – The action on your firearm is closed and cocked on a live round. Your firearm should only be in this state when you are about to take your shot.

When walking and climbing over or crawling under fences and tree branches, it is important to remember you are carrying a firearm. If you are hunting solo, be sure to unload your firearm and put it down before you navigate any obstacles. If you are with a companion, hand them your firearm once it is made safe so you can move about safely.

There are numerous methods of properly carrying your firearm in the field:

1. Using a sling
2. Elbow or side carry
3. Trail carry (using one hand around the firearm)
4. Shoulder carry
5. Cradle carry
6. Ready carry (using both hands to hold the firearm).

When out in the field, we should remember to follow proper hunting etiquette, including:

- Leave gates the way you find them
- Ask permission to light cooking fires, keeping them small as possible
- Put your fires out properly before leaving
- Ask before gathering firewood or using a chainsaw
- Stay off stock routes and keep to defined tracks
- When spotlighting, ensure target identification and be careful danger zones
- Stay clear of water troughs
- Take your rubbish home with you
- Give the property owner your itinerary
- If your hunt is successful, offer to share your game with the owner
- Report any suspicious or unusual events
- Don't invite new people to a property
- Look after the areas as if they were your own.

When in the field, you should also abide by the Hunters' Code, which says:

- Consider yourself a guest on your hunting property
- Obey the rules of safe gun handling
- Obey all game laws
- Ensure you have practiced enough to obtain a clean kill
- Assist in conservation efforts
- Pass on proper firearms and hunting behaviours and skills to younger generations.

Just as we are instructed to never leave our baggage unattended at the airport, we should never leave a loaded firearm unattended. If you see a firearm unattended, you should assume that it is loaded, treating it that way until it has been declared 'cleared'.

Always put firearm safety both in the field and on the range at the forefront and teach new shooters to do the same. 🎯

DATABASE CLEANUP A MUST FOR REBUILD

By David Henty

The National Firearms Register (NFR), an announced priority of National Cabinet, will be operational by July 2028, and provide a comprehensive, near real-time view of registered firearms, suppressors, and licence holders across the country, according to the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC).

Costing about 160 million in taxpayers' dollars over four years (2024–28), the NFR will enhance law enforcement's ability to assess firearms risks, trace firearms across borders, and share critical information between police agencies. It will also support dealer licence verification, issue alerts for high-risk events, and offer national reporting and analysis capabilities according to the Commission. No ongoing cost of the Register has been released.

The ACIC says it will coordinate with partners, leveraging its intelligence systems to support the Register's implementation. While enforcement remains the responsibility of states and territories, the Commonwealth oversees import and export controls.

The NFR will enhance existing ACIC systems like the Australian Firearms Information Network (AFIN) and the National Firearms Identification Database and enable faster access to more accurate data from state, territory and Commonwealth firearm registries and portals. The Commission claims that strict safeguards will ensure the enhanced AFIN system is secure and accessible only to law enforcement and select agencies.

"This initiative marks the most significant enhancement of Australia's firearms management systems in nearly three decades. With all governments and jurisdictions dedicated to completing this landmark program within four years, it promises to significantly improve the safety of both the community and the police," said Jeremy Johnson, Executive Director Business and Partnerships.

"Firearms continue to be a top priority for our agency. Whether it's through threat assessments or using our intelligence capabilities, we're focused on identifying and addressing risks to keep our people and communities safe," he said.

POLITICS IN FOCUS



The National Firearms Register Newsletter.

As written in previous issues of *The Report* magazine, at the very least, it is hoped that by the states being forced to rebuild their firearms databases that the information will be cleansed of incorrect information on firearms ownership. It is subsequently hoped that licensed shooters with registered firearms will not be subject to improper accusations or be blamed for incorrect records on the database.

Industry insiders have told *The Report* that some state firearm register databases have about 30 per cent of incorrect information. 🎯

FIX IT STICKS

A LONG-TERM REVIEW

If you have been searching for some precise and portable tools for scope mounting and general gunsmithing, give 'Fix It Sticks' a look in this long-term review with Brendan Jones.

Up for review in this article is Fix It Sticks. In a specific sense, a 'Rifle and Optics Toolkit' in two variations, along with a few other products, but in a broader sense this is a review of the Fix It Sticks 'ecosystem' as a whole.

Fix It Sticks is an American small tools company founded and headquartered in Chicago, Illinois, with its manufacturing undertaken in Taiwan. The brand claims that at the core of their design ethos there are three things: portability, precision and performance.

In essence, the Fix It Sticks ecosystem is a 1/4-inch bit and driver product, with its key point of difference - apart from aiming to be high quality, focusing on the compact portable concept - being its torque drivers and torque limiters. Beyond that, they have all manner of other accoutrements and gadgets related to shooting - some very clever, some more gimmicky. While there is a definite focus on shooting, they also offer kits and tools specific to bowhunting, mountain biking and general use.

Description

The case is the first thing you interact with: Rifle and Optics Toolkit with Individual Torque Limiters. It is made from a nylon Cordura-style fabric in black. One side has molle-style webbing, the other a large patch of Velcro. The case is 17x10.5cm, and about 3cm deep at the spine. It has a zip closure that goes around three sides, allowing it to be opened right up. Twin zips with lace tabs allow for quick access and closure in any position. Inside the case is a hard rubber bit holder that runs down the

spine, that has 21 holes for 1/4-inch bits and 11 holes for 8/32 bits. On one side of the case are three sewn-in elastic loops, which can be used to secure the T-wrench. On the other is a mesh pocket, with five more elastic loops inside.

The kit is listed to come with the company's T-Way T-Handle Wrench, which takes 1/4 bits not only where you would expect, but also in either end of the handle for when more leverage is required. Instead, my kit came with the Modular T-Drive, the only difference being a knurled-thumb

screw on top of the handle allowing it to be removed. All three positions have magnetic retention of bits that are as strong as you would want them to be. The long shaft of the T-handle has a plastic sleeve that spins (they also offer ratcheting versions, which I have tested).

The kit comes with 15 bits (T10, T15, T20, T25, Hex 3/32", 5/64", 1/8", 5/32", 3/16", 2.5mm, 3mm, 4mm, 5mm, P1, Slotted 5mm), four individual torque limiters (15, 25, 45, 65 in-lbs), which are labelled in both in-lbs and Nm and colour coded, a 1/4 hex to square adaptor, and a half-inch socket.

A second variant of the kit is the Rifle and Optics Toolkit with All-In-One Torque Driver. The contents of the kit are identical, apart from the four torque limiters being replaced with a single torque driver (15 to 65 in-lbs.), and a more compact case with a different storage layout.

A compact kit like the Rifle and Optics Toolkit with Individual Torque Limiters is portable, yet very capable, and brings high precision and maximum repeatability to the field. Note the author's kit has the addition of some pin punches (from Fix It Sticks) visible in the mesh pocket.

When more leverage is desired for larger torque values, the bits can be changed to the ends of the handle. Pictured here is the top of the line Ratcheting T-Way Wrench with Locking Hex Drive, but this feature is common to all version of the T handle tools.

Portable tools translate easily to the home workshop environment. The reverse is not true of bulky tools designed without portability in mind.

Testing and opinion

I have been using this equipment for more than two years - both at home on the bench and in the field. The kit presents well, with the case and the tools inside being high quality, as you would expect for the price. Bits are retained very well in the case and don't come loose, which is a key trait for taking things into the field. In writing this, I took the open kit and turned it upside down and shook it without anything coming loose.

The bits are precise and the tools are well made. They fit well into TORX screws, both small and large, with precise tight fits. I haven't rounded off and snapped any bits or burred out any screws, which is more than I can say for previous sets of shooting-related driver sets I have owned.

The all-in-one driver doesn't need to be set and doesn't 'break' at the torque. You simply watch the scale

on the side and tighten until the indicator line rotates to match your desired torque spec. This version trades some repeatability/precision for versatility and weight.

The individual limiters work by clicking over once the specified torque that limiter is designed for is reached. These trade versatility for ultimate repeatability. It's pretty boring, as far as a review goes; they just work. They do what you want them to do, which is what you want tools to do. Primarily, mine have been used for mounting and changing optics, maintaining correct torque for changing stocks and general home gunsmithing tasks. The whole reason I adopted this ecosystem is for swapping optics in the field, going between scopes for testing purposes, and swapping a day scope and thermal scope using return-to-zero mounts, with repeatable, precise torque settings. They have performed this task flawlessly. In my opinion, the individual torque limiters are as repeatable and consistent as you can get.

A quality compact kit works the same at home as it does at the range or in the field. A big, bulky toolkit doesn't travel well, if you take it at all.

I have no way of testing their accuracy, but it's stated the 31 individual designations from 4 in-lb through 100 in-lb have a nominal 6% +/- accuracy, and 10 per cent for the 140 in-lb version. It's also claimed limiters below 40 in-lbs should retain accuracy through 20,000 cycles and over 50 in-lbs through 5000 cycles.

Other gear

The Fix It Sticks lineup has exploded with all kinds of other gear compatible with its system and tailored to shooting sports. I do own and use some of their other products, like scope-levelling devices, but this article can't hope to scratch the surface of what's on offer. Readers will have to avail themselves of the website to do their own research, albeit at their own risk to their credit card...

Availability and pricing

Fix It Sticks products can be found in many Australian gun stores and online retailers, as well as Amazon. The most popular kits and individual items can be sourced from those places. The Fix It Sticks website ships to Australia and has the full complement of items listed individually, additional to kits.

Like most websites, there are discounts for first-time signups and promotions and discount codes offered throughout the year.

Prices on the website fluctuate daily with the AUD-USD currency markets, but at the time of writing, the Rifle and Optics Toolkit with Individual Torque Limiters was \$303, and the Rifle and Optics Toolkit with All-In-One Torque Driver was \$194. A savvy shooter will shop for the best price at time of purchase and arbitrage the currency lag of the website versus brick-and-mortar stores to their advantage.



Conclusion

Fix It Sticks are not cheap. But they are the best mix of quality, precision and portability I have found. When weighing up the price, you should also factor in other costs – such as the costs of:

- re-buying cheaper tools a few times first
- an equipment failure on day one of a week-long hunting trip
- needing to make last-minute adjustments or repairs at the range on the morning of a shooting competition
- some quality tools might pale into insignificance when weighed up against the cost of a ruined bucket-list trip, a lost competition, or the lost trophy of a lifetime.

Buy once, cry once, as they say, in more ways than one. In such scenarios, the price of having a precise and portable toolkit on hand, and one you can rely on, is, in my opinion, priceless.

This was an un-solicited review, with all the equipment purchased by the author at full retail pricing. ☺



4 Individual Torque Limiters kit.



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CALDWELL E-MAX PRO SERIES

Electronic earmuffs review

By Sam Talbot

As someone who frequently shoots with new equipment and in new disciplines, clear communication with instructors and range officers is essential. So many times, I have been offered what was no doubt great advice, but couldn't quite hear it, and so I ended up not improving and getting the same old mediocre score.

Protecting your ears is important, but not being able to hear other people can clearly be a big problem, which is where electronic earmuffs like the Caldwell E-Max Pro Series can make a big difference.

If you've used noise-cancelling headphones before, electronic earmuffs function in almost the opposite way. Instead of cancelling ambient noise, they block the loud bangs, while amplifying quieter noises like voices. This makes it much easier to communicate on the range without compromising your hearing protection.

I will say though, always be careful with electronic earmuffs because sometimes the volume can be too high initially. If you're using them for the first time, I would recommend first trying them out a good distance away from any shooting to make sure they are working properly and giving yourself time to calibrate them.

The E-Max Pros offer a 23dB Noise Reduction Rating and deliver stereo sound, providing clarity and spatial awareness. They also fit snugly over the ears, offering full insulation across the ear cup. They're slightly on the firm side, which can get uncomfortable over a long day, but I'd rather they be too firm than too loose – better to be safe than sorry.

While I don't think I could wear them for an entire day straight, taking them off between rounds of

shooting makes all the difference. For those who like to double-up on ear protection, especially if shooting indoors, the cups are large enough to accommodate ear plugs without compromising the fit.

The battery compartment is easy to access, and securely locked in place, giving you confidence that it won't pop open during use. There's even a 3.5mm audio jack, so you could technically plug in your music if you so desired.

Another thoughtful feature is the auto shutoff, which occurs after four hours of inactivity. That means you won't be wasting all your battery life if you happen to forget to turn them off. The volume controls are very user-friendly, the plus and minus buttons are deeply indented, making them easy to distinguish by feel.

I have generally kept the volume turned down fairly low to ensure gunshots don't sneak through, especially when shooting higher-calibre firearms. Overall, a solid option for anyone who needs to balance communication with hearing protection.

The E-Max Pro Series is available in a range of colours, including youth sizes, and can be found at most reputable gun shops for just over \$100. ☺

The power button lights up to show it's on, with volume controls on either side.

Available in a range of colours.

Three triple A batteries housed in an easily accessible, but secure compartment.



LOBBYING FOR OUR MEMBERS

We already have the
runs on the board

By Tim Bannister

You would have to be naïve or deaf, dumb and blind to not understand that firearms can provoke emotional and sometimes illogical responses.

As hunters, collectors and target shooters we aren't fazed by them, in fact, a new firearm or cartridge will just pique our interest, and we will want to know more about the engineering and chemistry that make it all go bang. But it is in our interest to understand there are those in the public, the police, the lawmakers in parliament and often in the city-based media, who have less than positive opinions on firearms.

The media, competing for attention, will often lower its editorial bar to sensationalism mode. Clickbait or snide commentary designed to provoke fear or disgust are the tools used to please their editor bosses, and ultimately the owners who in turn need to feed their shareholders.

The *West Australian* newspaper ran a headline, 'Teaching kids to kill' after they interviewed a 16-year-old girl who had won a junior local target shooting competition. I personally intervened in that outrage, contacting the editor and the two journalists who wrote the story. The outcome was that the two journalists resigned from the paper. It was actually a sub editor who wrote the derogatory headline but the journalists felt betrayed. Imagine how the 16-year-old girl felt.

Sitting at an outside table in Christchurch, taking a break from an international conference on firearm ownership called *In the right hands*, I was talking to a police inspector from a state firearms licensing branch.

"It's all about KPIs. We have to reach certain expectations with charges and arrests and I tell them, even if they have stored all their firearms properly and they are all registered, [when undertaking a firearms storage inspection] stick your head up in the ceiling to see if they are growing drugs or check their car window tinting to see if it's too dark!" Mr Inspector said.

"So, it's just a matter of *proving* they are criminals, then?" I asked.

"Exactly!" he said, before the blood drained away from

his face, twiggling that he had just walked into an honesty trap with someone who had minutes earlier introduced himself as a shooting magazine editor. It made a great story.

When Prime Minister Kevin Rudd was first elected to run the nation, his party put in place a NSW Labor party numbers man as the Minister for Home Affairs – the department in charge of the then Customs Department and keeper of the National Firearms Agreement. He announced to the media that his job was to stop "the importation of shotguns that look like rifles and rifles that look like shotguns". He had no idea what he was talking about and no intention of listening to anyone who did, let alone the legitimate firearms owning community. Thankfully, he retired not long after, citing poor health. The posting had been a 'job for the boys' - a way of fattening up his pension as a reward before retirement and he faded into political obscurity.

I have worked in the world of firearms for more than a quarter of a century and I sometimes wonder what would I as the 19-year-old media university student think about the path I took writing and promoting the shooting sports and hunting, lobbying lawmakers, calling out those that misuse illegal firearms and hassling the antis?

The university café was the social hub of the institution, and I could often be found there drinking my fourth coffee on any given afternoon. One such afternoon I remember telling a social sciences student that I was going shooting on the weekend at a friend's farm and it was going to be a lot of fun. "Guns aren't fun," she snapped; "they are dangerous!" glaring at me in disgust. Boy, she would be writhing in tofu and decaf coffee-fed outrage if she knew what I did now.

So how do you change the police, the public, the media and the lawmaker's opinions on firearms? Sometimes you can't. Sometimes there is an incentive for them to hold



LOBBYING FOR OUR MEMBERS

those negative views on legitimate firearms ownership, be it a police rank promotion or posting to a more exciting department, going up the ladder as a sensationalist journalist or a politician getting re-elected because they appear tough on crime, even though the new laws will only affect the law abiding.

But lobby we must and should, and I have seen the progress we have made as a community since facing the derision by then-Prime Minister John Howard in the late 1990s. We have gone to local government meetings, state parliament, federal parliament, the United Nations in New York and collaborated with international organisations such as the World Forum on Shooting Activities (WFSA), New Zealand’s Council of Licensed Firearm Owners (COLFO) and the National Rifle Association (NRA). We have condemned those who are against our sport and we have supported those who support us.

The one thing in common during the past few decades is that it has always been a SSAA President from Queensland leading the lobbying and fronting up, particularly on the federal and international stages. No other SSAA National President has represented the Association internationally or driven lobbying efforts to protect our chosen recreation. Former state and National Presidents Geoff Jones and Bob Green are the only two National

Presidents to have put themselves out there in person to push for our freedoms and push back on those who would restrict our sport.

It was under their encouragement and tutelage that I was encouraged to learn and practice the art of lobbying and debate. Alongside Bob and Geoff, I became a member of the Australian Firearms Advisory Council, reporting to the federal government, gave statements at the United Nations and generally interrogated and outed untruthful reports by anti-firearm groups and media. I met privately with Prime Ministers and spoke out at Senate Inquiries set up by the Greens, designed to blame law-abiding shooters for the violence of unlicensed criminals. I then, in turn, employed and trained young and intelligent staff to assist in our lobbying and I can now reveal that one of those staff members, now working in agricultural advocacy, has agreed to assist SSAA Queensland and its Australian Shooters Alliance organisation (ASA) with national lobbying. Many of you would know her and have read the shooting stories by Rachael Oxborrow in this magazine and previous publications. Rachael already has strong contacts and has already talked with the Attorney General’s firearms unit on the National Firearms Registry rollout.

As SSAA Queensland further undertakes its own operations and

responsibilities, the decision to spearhead our own lobbying at the federal and international arenas was an obvious one. It has always been Queenslanders, and the staff they chose, who have carried out the lobbying and are well known and respected worldwide.

We have been awarded official stakeholder status under the Federal Attorney General’s office, are now affiliated with the NRA and have strong links with other international shooting policy groups.

We already have the runs on the board and we will continue to fight to look after our members going forward, just as we have in the past. 🇦🇺



Tim Bannister speaks with Canada’s firearms advocate Tony Bernado, now the President of the World Forum on Shooting Activities.



Bob Green speaking at the United Nations in New York. Only SSAA National Presidents from Queensland have ever represented the Association on the international stage. Bob is now the General Manager of SSAA Queensland.



Bob and Geoff met numerous times with New Zealand’s firearms advocacy group, the Council of Licensed Firearm Owners (COLFO).



Past SSAA Queensland and SSAA National President Geoff Jones talking with Senator Bridget McKenzie.



There is never a dull moment at the Hervey Range Shooting Complex in Townsville, whether it is hosting special come-n-try days or regular weekly shoots, it’s a great place to be as a sporting shooter in northern Queensland.

May 3-5 saw 36 competitors, including two juniors, assemble at the picturesque range to compete in the state’s 2025 Combined Services Discipline Championships.

In fine conditions, the two junior shooters engaged in a fierce battle, shooting competitive scores within their grades and trading places in different matches.

For the remainder, as usual, matches were tightly contested, with lots of banter among all competitors, which lead to good shooting and a very enjoyable weekend.

The competition proved a great opportunity to test out the Shot Marker electronic target scoring system on 15 lanes for rifle matches in both practice and competition. This trial was an effort to prove the system for future use in state and national Combined Services Discipline events. Use of this scoring system has the potential to save time (reducing the need to move forward to score and patch targets) and cut some cost from host branches (negating the need to purchase targets and patches).

Ultimately, a technical issue saw the organisers having to revert to manual targets and scoring; however, the lessons learned from this event should allow successful use of the system in future events.

SSAA Townsville Branch President Jamie Mayne thanks the committee and members of the Branch for allowing the discipline to host the event and for their support in organising the championships. He made specific mention of Lloyd Martene, who he said supported and guided him through running the event. Steve Knight also deserved credit for supplying, setting up and running the Shot Marker electronic target scoring system. Of course, no event can be so successful without the selfless efforts of the volunteers and shooters who gave their time preparing and running the shoot rather than competing themselves. 🇦🇺

PISTOL PLACEGETTERS:

Top Gun:

Michael Beak – 508.21
Monika White – 499.13
Cameron Mitchell – 493.07

Top Gun Junior:

Grace McCloskey – 399.11
Lucas Heidrich – 331.02
Most X Class 1 3P Core: Michael Beak – 18
Most X Class 2 3P Core: Michael Beak – 18
Highest 3P Score Class 1: Michael Beak – 346.18

Top Gun Junior:

Top Gun Junior: Lucas Heidrich – 207.05
Top Gun: Cameron Mitchell – 283.2
3p Event Champion highest score 3P Core
Standard Rifle: Cameron Mitchell – 144.13
Junior Rifle Champion Agg 3P Del Rapid:
Lucas Heidrich – 207.05
Most V Bulls Standard Rifle 3P Core:
Cameron Mitchell – 12



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WARTHOG V-SHARP A4 KNIFE SHARPENER

The Warthog V-Sharp A4 looks like something pinched from a machinist’s bench, but the moment you drag a dull knife through the diamond hones, the engineering makes perfect sense. Straight out of the box the A4 is ready to work; there are no screws to fit and no tripod of suction cups to fiddle with. Set it down, choose an angle, and start sharpening.

There are only a few things you can adjust on the sharpener and doing so is easy. These are the angle of the blade guard, the angle of the hones, and the type of hones used – which doubles with the angle of the hones anyway.

The sharpener comes set at 25° angle, which was perfect for my kitchen knives along with typical hunting and pocket knives. Other knives may require a slight adjustment up or down, like straight razors which would be best used at a 15° angle, or for machetes and survival knives which would need an angle of 30°.

The V Sharp A4 is very simple and satisfying to use. For a dull kitchen knife, start by ‘sawing’ the blade up and down through the hones - heel at the top of the stroke, tip at the bottom, for about 30–40 passes to re-establish the edge.

Next, switch to downward-only strokes to refine it; that’s the step you’ll jump straight to for touch-ups later. Finally, pop the hones out, flip them to expose the built-in finishing steels, and give the blade another 10–15 downward pull-throughs. You’ll finish with a clean, working edge that slices tomatoes and protein without drama.

Part of the charm of the sharpener is the feel. Each stroke pushes the spring-mounted hones apart before they snap back, giving tactile and audible feedback that makes the process fun. I’m genuinely considering leaving mine out on the bench because it looks that cool.

Warthog sells several siblings to the A4, for example the Elite is one that comes mounted on a wooden base, which is handy, and I put mine on a roughly A4-sized



wooden chopping board anyway. A lot of the other models offer something a bit extra like that for slightly more cost.

Replacement diamond hones are available in 270, 325 (default with this model), 600, and 1000 grit, and swapping them is dead simple. That default 325-grit set strikes a great balance for everyday utility knives and works well at 20°, 25°, or 30° settings.

Overall, the V-Sharp A4 is a fast, confidence-building way to keep household knives in proper working shape, and it’s brilliant for showing off at a mate’s place when you restore their edge in minutes. It’s not the rig you’d throw in a pack for field sharpening, and it doesn’t replace specialist systems for ultra-precise bevel work, but it might be the sharpener you’ll actually use most often.

To see how easy the Warthog V-Sharp A4 is to use, go to warthogusa.com/how-it-works RRP: \$139.00



The springs pushed out as the knife reaches the bottom.

POLITICS IN FOCUS

KNIFE LAWS

Escalating controls, public safety and the cost to makers and users

By Rod Hoare



Knives (edged tools) have a long and rich history across the world, having been used as tools for hunting and dressing game since the stone age (2.5 million years ago) where they were made from flint and obsidian. Throughout this time, knives have always been a utilitarian tool making life easier for the billions of humans that use them. Yes, there are knives and swords purposely designed and used as edged weapons in battle, the vast majority, however, are designed, sold and used as a tool.

Australia has long maintained a complex patchwork of state-by-state knife laws, but recent legislative changes signal a shift toward stricter national attitudes around knife possession and crime. These new regulations have emerged in response to rising public concerns around knife-related violence, including highly publicised machete attacks and youth gang activity. However,

for those who use a knife as a tool on a daily basis, whether tradespeople, primary producers, outdoor enthusiasts, chefs, hunters, artisan makers, through to general homeowners, these laws pose serious challenges, restricting not only practical use, but also individual rights and cultural practices. Most adults would use an edged tool at least once a day carrying out their normal daily activities, what style of knife depends totally on the job at hand.

Having no single, unified set of knife laws in Australia, each state and territory enforces its own rules regarding what types of knives can be owned, carried, or sold. At the federal level, only the importation of prohibited weapons (such as switchblades, ballistic knives and disguised blades) is controlled under the *Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations 1956*.

Across all jurisdictions, a common rule applies (since the late 1980s to early 1990s): it is illegal

Above: All knives are wrongly assumed to be weapons and not tools by police, politicians and the media. Photo Peter Lewis (iStock).

Right: Machete wielding man in Northland Shopping Centre, Victoria, May 2025. Photo: The Australian newspaper.



to carry a knife in public without a lawful excuse. But the definition of ‘lawful excuse’ and what is considered a ‘prohibited weapon’ can vary widely between states and is at times ambiguous, leading to each state’s own police officers having differing views within their ranks of what is a ‘lawful excuse’. Finding the list of ‘prohibited weapons’, ‘controlled weapons’ and other regulated weapons in each state, especially if you travel across borders on a regular basis, can be a struggle, as I found out when writing this article.

In all states, having a ‘lawful excuse’ is the key to carrying a knife legally. But what counts as lawful differs:

- **Work use:** Chefs, carpenters, and tradespeople are generally allowed to carry knives needed for their job, but only when they’re working.
- **Outdoor use:** Bushwalkers, fishers, hunters and campers can usually carry blades, but only while engaged in that activity.
- **Religious use:** Sikhs carrying a ceremonial kirpan are usually exempt, but still face challenges from law enforcement unfamiliar with the law.
- **Culture:** Most culturally significant knives, for example the Scottish Sgian Dubh, are considered illegal to carry and is not an automatic exemption; a lawful excuse may include carrying at a traditional event where it is part of the dress code such as Highland Games, where the event is considered a lawful activity, but do some research and ask organisers for clarification.

Self-defence is *never* accepted as a lawful reason, even if you are carrying a small folding knife for protection. This principle underpins all Australian knife law and sets it apart from jurisdictions like the United States.

Victoria has become ground zero for the toughest knife laws in the country, following a spate of violent incidents involving youth gangs and large knives like machetes. Other states, including Queensland, are following this same path and are quietly introducing bans on machetes into legislation.



NSW Police scanning (wandering) a member of the public in a shopping centre. Photo: NSW Police.

Key changes include:

- **Ban on machetes:** Machetes are now listed as prohibited weapons in Victoria and other states, unless you hold a specific exemption or permit.
- **Knife surrender programs:** Similar to gun amnesties, Victorian citizens were encouraged to hand over knives to police stations, no questions asked.
- **Increased police powers:** Police now have greater authority to conduct random searches at transport hubs, events, and public spaces in nearly every state of Australia, including ‘wandering’ with metal detectors.
- **Stricter penalties:** Carrying a knife without a lawful excuse now attracts steeper fines and longer potential jail time.

However, in targeting crime, these laws have placed burdens on legitimate makers, sellers and users.

Australia boasts a vibrant and growing community of artisan knife makers, many of whom are gaining international recognition for their craft. Knife shows, online sales, and community workshops are all part of the culture. The legislative trend toward blanket bans and increasing restrictions has created serious obstacles and has directly and indirectly affected the future livelihood of thousands of people who are associated with the industry. This also includes retailers of factory knives made overseas in Australia.

These restrictions have seen Australia’s largest knife show, the Sydney Knife Show, be cancelled for 2025, due to the requirements the NSW Police put onto the organisers, making it unfeasible to run the show. It became clear the NSW Police did not want to work with the organisers and wanted to make it difficult for the show to be held. There have been thousands of knife shows worldwide without any unlawful incidence at any. These shows bring together an artisan community who make, in Australia, a quality tool or art piece, and sell those tools to people who require them, along with bringing in hundreds of thousands of dollars in economic benefits to the region each show is held, through travel, accommodation, food, drink, etc...not to mention the benefits of community interaction.

Makers, retailers and users now face uncertainty around what can be bought, sold or even made. In Victoria, machetes are now illegal to sell, even if intended for agricultural, forestry, or camping use without an exemption. Queensland has put restrictions on folding knives with a blade out each end, a common style of multi-blade utility pocketknife, as

well as a folding knife that can be open one-handed, something that needs to be done regularly when working and you don’t have both hands free. These are just some examples where the industry should be consulted during the legislation process.

There’s no question that knife crime is a real and growing issue, particularly among youth. In Melbourne, police have reported a 70 per cent increase in knife-related offences since 2020, with many offenders under the age of 21. Community concern is justified and action is certainly needed.

Many argue, including myself, that broad prohibitions on tools like machetes, bushcraft knives, hunting knives, chef’s knives, or artisanal blades will go too far. “Laws should target the misuse of knives, not the mere possession of them,” says one Victorian knife maker, who asked not to be named. “You wouldn’t ban hammers because someone used one in a robbery, or a vehicle because it was driven into a crowd.” Remember, it has been illegal since the 1990s in most states to carry a knife without a ‘lawful excuse’, so if they are carrying a knife for robbery or personal attack, they are



Confusingly, daggers are prohibited weapons in some states and okay in others; they have never been used in an unlawful crime in any state. Photo: Rod Hoare.

already breaking a law that’s been in place for more than 30 years, plus every state has age restrictions in place for the sale of knives. If a youth has a knife, it’s more than likely come from home or an acquaintance, not bought at a shop. It’s a fact that a criminal will not stop carrying or using a knife because the police and politicians put a ban on a certain type.

Organisations like the Australian Knifemakers Guild (AKG) and the Australian Knife Art Association (KAA) are now lobbying for more nuanced legislation. They advocate for:

- Clear and simple exemptions for knife makers, legal users and collectors.
- Standardised national laws to eliminate confusion across state lines.
- Education campaigns focusing on responsible use, rather than criminalising a tool.
- Punish the criminal offenders, not legitimate users or businesses.

Australia is at a crossroads. Rising knife crime is real, and community safety must be protected. But blanket bans on tools like machetes and vague definitions of ‘prohibited weapons’ threaten to erode the rights of ordinary citizens and cripple a growing artisan industry of bladesmiths and knifemakers. While public safety is paramount, the approach of banning certain styles of knives, risks criminalising legitimate users, choking creative industries, and undermining personal freedoms. 🌐

Websites below for state legislation and prohibited weapons, please be aware of your state’s rules (correct as of 20/6/25).

NSW

<https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/whole/html/inforce/current/act-1998-127#>

VIC

<https://www.police.vic.gov.au/topic/weapons-controls>
<https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/consumers-and-businesses/products-and-services/product-safety/sale-of-machetes-banned-in-victoria>

QLD

<https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/pdf/current/act-1990-071>
<https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/pdf/2017-06-30/sl-1997-wcr>

SA

<https://www.police.sa.gov.au/services-and-events/firearms-and-weapons/weapons>

WA

<https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/western-australia-police-force/weapons#schedule-1-prohibited-weapons>

NT

<https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/WEAPONS-CONTROL-ACT-2001>

TAS

<https://www.legislation.tas.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-1996-023>
<https://www.police.tas.gov.au/services-online/knives-and-edged-weapons-in-public-spaces/#:~:text=Under the Police Offences Act,places without a lawful excuse.>

ACT

<https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/a/1996-75/>

Over 80,000 Lithgow Model 12 bolt actions were made between 1947 and 1956.

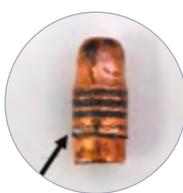


CLASSIC CARTRIDGES

The .22 Long Rifle

By Steve Marchant

Like some classic centrefire cartridges, such as the .45-70, .32-20, .303 British and 12-gauge shotgun, the .22 LR began life as a black powder cartridge. Unlike the centrefire cartridges, the .22 LR has the priming compound in the rim and ignition of the cartridge occurs when the gun's firing pin crushes the rim. The type and quantity of gun powder loaded in currently available .22 LR cartridges is not published by manufacturers. However, pulling the bullet from a Winchester PowerPoint .22



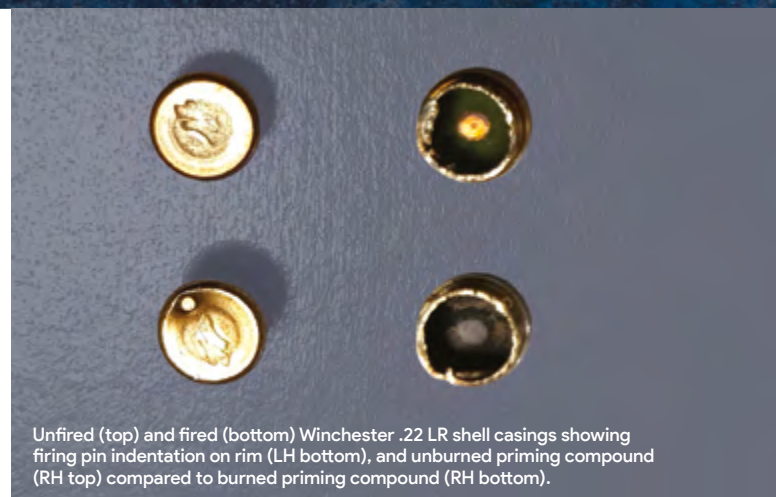
.22 LR bullets have a 'heel' that fits inside the shell case.

LR produces approximately two grains of very fine gunpowder. It also reveals a bullet with a narrower 'heel' portion that fits inside the shell case. Unlike centrefire cartridges, the outside diameter of the .22 LR shell case is the same as the bullet calibre (.224").

Preceded by the .22 BB Cap (1845), .22 Short (1857) and .22 Long (1871), the .22 LR was developed by J. Stevens Arms and Tool Company in 1887. The original black powder loading of the .22 LR was a 40-grain bullet at 1150 feet per second

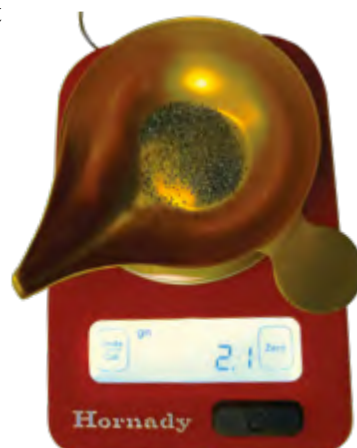


Winchester .22 LR powder at left is very fine, compared to ADI AS30 pistol powder (centre) and AR2209 rifle powder on right.



Unfired (top) and fired (bottom) Winchester .22 LR shell casings showing firing pin indentation on rim (LH bottom), and unburned priming compound (RH top) compared to burned priming compound (RH bottom).

(fps). The first high-velocity .22 LR was introduced by Remington in 1930. It utilised a smokeless powder loading, which increased the speed of the same 40g bullet to 1,250 fps. In 1977 CCI introduced the Stinger .22, which launched a 32-grain hollow point bullet at 1640 fps and was the first successful hyper-velocity .22 LR rimfire. A .22 LR shot cartridge is also



Winchester Powerpoint .22 LR shell holds about two grains of powder.



CCI Stinger – the first successful hyper-velocity .22 LR cartridge.

loaded by most manufacturers and is useful for rat, bird and other pest control.

The .22 LR is the most accurate and highly developed rimfire cartridge and the most popular match cartridge in existence. Indeed, .22LR match ammunition is capable of outstanding accuracy in precision firearms. For example, in an extensive accuracy test carried out in 2010, 28 out of 55 different types of .22 LR ammo grouped five shots into less than an inch at 100 yards, with Eley Match producing the smallest group of 0.455". In relation to hunting, the .22 LR is effective on rabbit-sized game out to 75 metres, has imperceptible recoil and is very cost effective compared to all other factory loaded ammunition. It is thus the most widely used cartridge for small game hunting and informal 'plinking'.



Heavy barrel Sako M78 rifle is capable of outstanding accuracy.

CLASSIC CARTRIDGES



Federal Game Shok .22 LR shot cartridge.

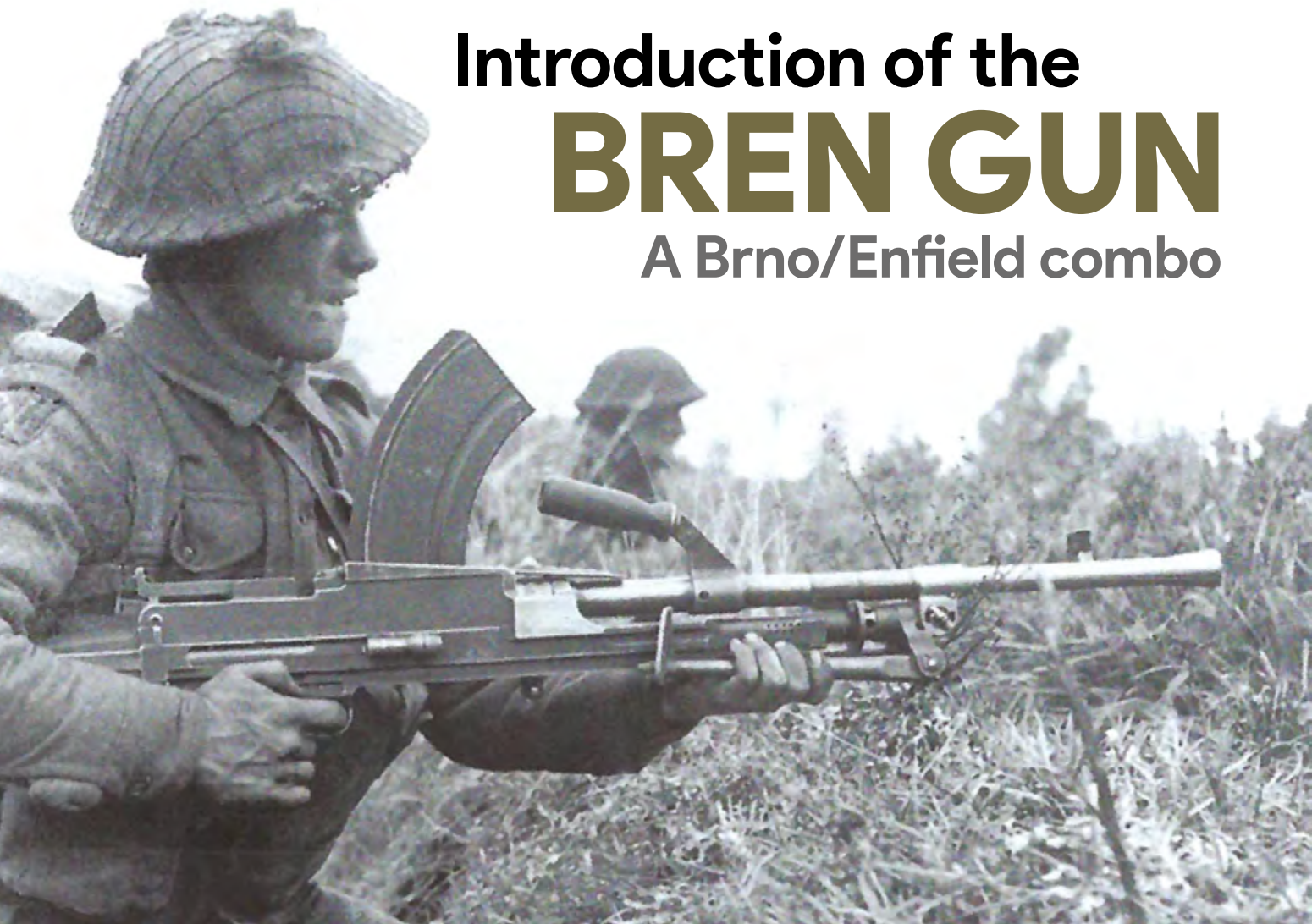
While the .22 LR is not a 'standard military issue' cartridge, silenced .22 pistols have been used by various military forces in tactical and covert 'close quarters battle' operations since 1943. The .22 LR is chambered in almost every configuration of firearm and firearm action, including rifle/shotgun combination guns. Thus, the humble .22 LR is the greatest cartridge of all, and it will doubtlessly hold number one position for the foreseeable future. ☺



Savage Model 42 combination gun in .22 LR (top barrel) and .410 shotgun (bottom barrel). <https://savagearms.com/firearms/model/42-takedown>

Introduction of the BREN GUN

A Brno/Enfield combo



A Bren gunner of the 8th Royal Scots in Holland in 1943.

By Paul Heiser

In 1920 the British were considering replacing the Lewis gun with something lighter in weight. The Lewis was reliable and had a large capacity magazine, but it was heavy. The British were hoping that they could find a light machine gun (LMG) as a suitable replacement for the Lewis and, if possible, a partial replacement for the Vickers medium machine gun.

The most viable candidate as replacement was the Browning automatic rifle (BAR), which produced by Colt in the United States. It was dependable, already in production, and Colt,

the manufacturer, was eager to promote it. The British ordered 25 BARs in .303 from Colt at a cost of £63 each. They were modified to accept the .303 round and had a curved banana magazine with a 20-capacity. The British Treasury was not impressed with the potential purchase of new light machine guns when thousands of Lewis guns were in store, so the search for a replacement was halted.

During the 1920s the Czechoslovakian Government was developing an LMG for its newly established army. What was to

become known as the VZ 26 was accepted by the Czechs and entered service in 1928. The British were obviously aware of the new LMG, and the favourable reports being received from customers and the British purchased one VZ 26 LMG at the astronomical price of £262 in 7.92x57.

The British were impressed with what they received and ordered further variants to test, including the VZ 28, VZ 30, VZ 33 and VZ 34, all chambered in 7.92x57. The VZ LMGs, in their various incarnations, repeatedly outperformed all their competitors

"...the ZGB 33 version was finally accepted by the British in August 1934."

and the ZGB 33 version was finally accepted by the British in August 1934. Tooling for the new LMG was set up at Enfield in 1934 and drawings in inches, rather than metric, were available by January 1935. The metric drawings for the FN FAL rifle in the 1950s took 18 months to complete, and it is a reasonable conclusion that the Czech LMGs made such an impression that acceptance was a formality.

In September of 1937, the first Mk I Brens (BR from Brno and EN from Enfield) were produced at a rate of 100 per month at the high price of £40 each. By late 1938 the rate of production was 300 Bren LMGs per week. The simplified MkII and MkIII by 1943 were being produced at 1000 per week and were lighter and somewhere between 20 and 25 per cent cheaper.

Of the 30,000 Brens taken to France by the British in 1939, most were either lost or destroyed.



The Bren gun.



The Lewis machine gun.

After Dunkirk, the British were left with only 2,300 Brens. Germany had been impressed with the VZ series of LMGs it acquired when it invaded Czechoslovakia and put them into service, as they were in the 7.92x57 calibre - the same calibre the Germans used. Captured British Brens were put into service by the Germans and designated the MG 136(e) and were kept in .303 calibre.

The only design issue of the Bren was that the

magazine was not lengthened to accommodate the rimmed .303 cartridge, and it was recommended that the 30-round magazines only be loaded with 27 or 28 rounds. Thirty rounds of .303 in the magazine were noted to weaken the magazine spring.

The Bren was converted during the late 1950s to 7.62x51 NATO calibre (L4A* series) and went on to serve in Northern Ireland, the Falkland Islands and as second line LMG in the Persian Gulf in 1990-91 and was finally withdrawn after that. The Indian Government finally withdrew locally produced Brens from frontline service in 2009. ☺

***Note:** The average wage for a male Australian factory worker in 1938 was approximately £270 per annum, while an office worker was paid approximately £320 per annum. This gives guidance as to the monetary values in the article.*

Black Hound

KEEPING MAN'S BEST FRIENDS SAFE

By Taylah Campbell May



If camping and road tripping with your furry best friends are some of the best things in life, then Black Hound is the company for you. Black Hound provides a safe travel solution for your dog. A loose dog in your vehicle can cause distractions to the driver and injuries to you and your pets. If you happen to be involved in an accident, having your pets loose or in a poorly made crate could have more devastating consequences than just damage to a vehicle.

Black Hound has extensive knowledge and training from their decade-long partnership with MIMSafe Sweden, a company that specialises in the design and manufacturing of crash-tested safety equipment for transporting dogs in vehicles. When Black Hound started, the company was collaborating with the SES Search and Rescue Unit training German Shepherds, which involved a six-hour round trip by car. German Shepherds are known to be high-energy and physically demanding. Poorly designed carriers didn't cut it while trying to contain their excitement as they approached their training grounds. This is where the search for a suitable and convenient travel cage began.

It is through Black Hound's policing history that the importance of safety for not only dogs, but their handlers too, became a key motto of their business. The company's first-hand experience with other products splintering during motor vehicle accidents made them aware of the extensive damage that can be caused to both the vehicle and its occupants, thus making the construction material and safety elements of utmost importance. The company also acknowledged that having a carrier in the car while your pets aren't traveling with you causes a major inconvenience so they made it their priority to find a product that doesn't impact the usability of your vehicle; it needed a solution that would provide safety, be removeable and require no expensive modifications to fit the product.

Black Hound's crates provide protection from front-on collisions, rear-end collisions, side collisions and roll overs.

- Frontal collisions**
 - Sudden stopping can result in loose pets travelling forward and stopping violently against what is in front of them.
- Rear-end collisions**
 - Pets located close to the intruding tailgate can be injured or get out of the vehicle trying to escape the chaos.
- Side collisions**
 - Often, pets can be thrown out of the vehicle if they are loose in the cargo area or back seat.
- Rollovers**
 - Windows are often broken open; this causes a risk of loose pets being thrown out of the vehicle leading to severe injury.

Protection needs to be able to withstand forces from all directions. Black Hound's Variocage provides 360-degree protection against dangers from all directions.

The company's research has exposed injuries in both people and pets, and not just in major life-threatening accidents. Devastating injuries can also occur in the event of heavy braking. The company has also identified people suffer severe injuries from loose objects (including dogs) in minor accidents. Black Hound urges all motorists to have their dogs or pets secured when travelling. "At Black Hound, we believe the most important things in life need to be properly safeguarded." Their motives align with MIMSafe, making their partnership ideal for them to be the Australian and New Zealand distributor of MIMSafe's revolutionary dog crate. MIMSafe crates have been expertly designed with safety in mind. ☺

SHOOT OFF!

Quiz

Welcome to another instalment of The Shoot Off! It's a chance to test your knowledge on firearms, hunting and the great outdoors. Whether you're a competitive shooter, or closer to a bushwalker, there's something here for everyone.

We think getting anything over 15 out of 20 makes an AA-grade quizzier. Answers can be found in the Sunset Gallery section on page 67.

SCORING

20 out of 20: Bullseye!

15+: 9 ring

12+: 8 ring

7 or fewer: Time to re-sight your 'scope'

QUESTIONS:

- 1 Which Australian marsupial has cube-shaped droppings?
- 2 Which is typically larger: a .243 Winchester or .308 Winchester?
- 3 When reloading, what tool is used to resize brass casings?
- 4 True or false: A free-floating barrel means it does not touch the stock after the action.
- 5 What term is used to describe when a shooter can aim directly at a target without adjusting for bullet drop?
- 6 True or false: The .222 Remington and the 5.56 NATO cartridges are the same.
- 7 Which Olympic shooting event requires the shooter to fire at a turning target for only a few seconds at a time?
- 8 Which SSAA shooting discipline is known for featuring 'as issued' military rifles and handguns across multiple eras, including World War I and II?
- 9 What type of firearm uses a revolving cylinder to hold ammunition?
- 10 Which type of ammunition is generally quieter and less powerful: subsonic or supersonic?
- 11 What measurement describes the internal diameter of a firearm's barrel?
- 12 What type of sight aligns a front post with a notched rear sight?
- 13 What is a 'boresnake' used for: cleaning, measuring or repairing?
- 14 What does the 'grain' number on a box of ammunition refer to?
- 15 What tool is used to measure cartridge length and case dimensions?
- 16 Which deer species is the largest in body size?
- 17 Which is not a target in the Lever Action discipline: bear, pig, crow, toad?
- 18 In Benchrest, what is an exceptionally tight group called?
- 19 Which discipline used the '900 Match Course' as the basis for its National Championships?
- 20 What action does a 'Swedish Mauser' use?

If you want more quizzing fun, there's a second half to Shoot Off!, with an extra 20 questions, on our website - ssaaqld.org.au/news-events/shoot-off-quiz/

Good luck

Eat WILD

Spring
GOAT
CURRY

Serves: 6

Prep: 30 min

Cook: 5 hours in a slow cooker

When looking for an easy goat dish with tons of flavour, try this simple slow-cooked goat curry. No need to add liquid to the start of this cook. The goat meat will do all the work. It's a dish that tastes better if you've bagged your own goat!

INGREDIENTS

- 1 kilogram of goat meat ('bone in' adds extra flavour)
- A pinch of ground cardamom
- A pinch of ground cloves
- 2 red onions, chopped
- 3.5 cm piece of fresh ginger, minced
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 jalapeño or red chillies, chopped (vary depending on heat of chili)
- 1 tablespoon butter or ghee
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tbsp coriander powder
- 2 tsp salt
- 2 tsp Kashmiri chilli powder (or paprika)
- 1 tsp cumin powder
- 1 tsp turmeric powder
- 1/8 to ¼ cayenne (optional)

Add towards the end:

- 2 cans diced tomatoes or fresh (800g)
- 1 tsp garam masala
- ½ cup to 1 cup water (depending on desired thickness)

HOW TO COOK IT

In a slow cooker, add all the ingredients, except the tomatoes, garam masala and water, which you will add near the end of the cook.

Set the slow cooker to high, grab your issue of *The Report* magazine and sit back while the dish cooks. Stir the curry every so often.

After four hours, add the water, tomatoes and garam masala. Continue to cook on high for another hour or so or until the meat is nice and tender.

Serve with rice or naan bread and garnish with extra coriander, chillis and a dollop of Greek yogurt if desired.

Recipe courtesy: Samantha Warren

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SHOOT OFF! Quiz

ANSWERS

1. Wombat

2. .308 Winchester

3. Resizing die

4. True

5. Point blank range

6. False

7. 25m Rapid Fire Pistol

8. Combined Services

9. Revolver

10. Subsonic

11. Calibre

12. Iron sights

13. Cleaning

14. Weight of the projectile

15. Callipers

16. Sambar

17. Toad

18. Screamer

19. Target Pistol

20. Bolt

PROTECT YOUR LICENCE!

SSAA members, please remember if you are using your membership to satisfy state-government requirements for a genuine reason to hold a firearm's licence, it is **your responsibility** to ensure your membership is **current and financial**. Your expiry date is written on your membership card.

MPR MINI

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CAT B LICENCE

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