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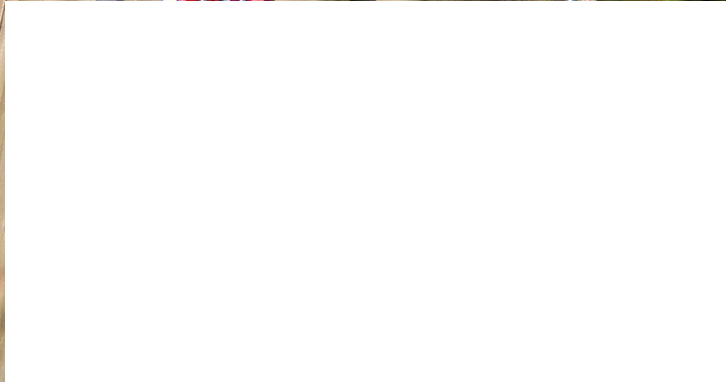
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THIS ISSUE'S COVER BROUGHT TO YOU BY:



## RUGID GEAR

A couple of years ago, a few buddies on their annual elk hunt were lamenting how dusty their gear was getting in the back of their UTVs. Even after they put their bows in garbage bags inside soft cases, the cams and pins and peeps on their bows kept getting covered in dust and gummy up with dirt.

Out of that problem, Rugid Gear's first product was born — a soft-sided but 100 percent dustproof bow case. It took the company about two years to get it right, but the result solved owner Jeff Bruss and his buddies' dust problems for good. Made from waterproof PVC with crushproof side padding, the Rugid soft-sided bow case keeps bows protected from the elements and from bumps and dings. Features include an elastic call/clip holder, rear tie-down straps, durable 500d waterproof PVC exterior, heavy-duty nylon carrying strap with neoprene handle, water-resistant zipper, and 7/8-inch removable foam padding for protection and flotation. The whole thing can be taken apart and hosed down — even pressure-washed — for cleaning inside and out.

Since that first bow case, Rugid has branched out into similarly designed rifle cases and smaller cases suitable for handguns, optics, gear or even laptops. Some models are also available with a fully waterproof zipper, which protects the case from full submersion or the most driving rain.

The company has also introduced a line of roto-molded coolers that includes five sizes, from 20 quarts up to 75 quarts, in a variety of colors. With up to 3 inches of foam insulation, 100 percent replaceable parts, dry ice compatibility and more carrying capacity than the same-sized coolers from other major brands, Rugid coolers offer considerable value for the money. Cooler accessories and a small and large cooler bucket are also available.

Rugid has additional products in development that will be introduced in the coming months.

Most Rugid products carry a five-year warranty. For more information on Rugid, visit:

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## Vista Outdoor Sells Savage Arms

As part of its transformation plan that includes divesting certain brands, Vista Outdoor has sold Savage Arms and Stevens firearms for \$170 million in a management-led buyout to a group of investors headed by Al Kasper, the president and CEO of Savage.

“Divesting our Savage brand was a key aspect of our transformation plan,” said Chris Metz, Chief Executive Officer of Vista Outdoor, in a press release. “While it was a difficult decision to sell such an iconic brand, I remain confident this was the correct choice to help Vista

Outdoor grow in those categories where we can have leadership positions.

“Savage is a fantastic business, and it deserves to continue to evolve into other firearms categories. At this time, however, we simply do not have the resources to transform Savage into the full-service firearms company that it deserves to be and, therefore, we determined the brand would be better off with a different owner. We’re excited to see Savage reach its full potential under new ownership.”

“We want to thank Vista Outdoor for the support over the last six years. They

invested in us and provided guidance in the transformation of the Savage brand, further developed our product portfolio allowing entry to new markets,” said Al Kasper, Savage President and Chief Executive Officer. “Savage is an extremely strong brand and in a great position to keep charging forward. The momentum gained under Vista Outdoor will propel us for future success. It is business as usual and Savage is excited to continue building on existing relationships within the firearms industry.”

## Make Plans to Attend the All-New Hunting Retailer Trade Show

Targeted specifically to retailers in the hunting and outdoors industry, the Hunting Retailer Show aims to bring the entire industry together under one roof. The exclusively business-to-business event will be held March 9 and 10, 2020, in Nashville, Tennessee, at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center. The exposition will feature manufacturers from the outdoor marketplace focusing primarily on the hunting industry. A 60,000-square-foot exhibit space has been reserved for the inaugural event, which promises to be highly targeted toward business owners, operators and managers.

Jeff Bruss, president of COLE Expos, brings more than two decades of trade show management experience to the event and leads a staff of professionals who owned, managed, grew and eventually sold one of the largest trade shows in the United States.

Bruss identified the need for such an event through ties to the outdoor industry on both the advertising/sales and retail sides. “I’ve been to multiple shows over the past few years and they were either not targeting the hunting market at all, or were specifically targeting one type of hunter.

The hunting industry is much more than just guns and archery equipment, and we hope to showcase it all,” Bruss said. “Even more disappointing are outdoor shows that don’t include the hunting market at all, concentrating solely on the camping, climbing, hiking, biking side of things. Hunting is a strong market and we intend to proudly represent that through this show.”

COLE Expos is owned by the same company as Grand View Outdoors. The synergies between the trade show organization and the B2B brands owned by Grand View should make a strong bond for advertising, promoting and launching this new event. Derrick Nawrocki, president of Grand View, said, “We’ve never had an opportunity like this in the long history of GVO. With our strong ties to the industry, we see this as a win-win for all involved.”

Exhibit space for the Hunting Retailer Show includes carpeted booths, opt-in attendee lists, free passes for exhibitors to gift to customers, free app-based lead retrieval and other value-added benefits. For questions regarding exhibit space please contact Brad Bisnette at (866) 933-2653 or email [show@huntingretailer.com](mailto:show@huntingretailer.com).

## Industry Day at the Range Signups Soon Closing

Industry Day at the Range invites prospective exhibitors to register now for the 15th Annual Industry Day at the Range, the largest and most influential one-day trade event in the hunting and shooting sports industry. The 2020 Industry Day at the Range will take place at the Boulder Rifle and Pistol Club in Boulder City, Nevada on Monday, January 20 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. – one day before SHOT Show. Remaining opportunities for the 2020 range day are extremely limited.

Available spaces are selling quickly, so potential participants are encouraged to register as soon as possible at [www.shotshowrangeday.com/registration](http://www.shotshowrangeday.com/registration). Prospective non-shooting display registrants are advised to sign up immediately since these booth spaces are selected in the order registrations are submitted and received. You do not need to be an exhibitor of SHOT Show in order to exhibit at Industry Day. Exhibitor registration closes on September 30, 2019.

More information about Industry Day at the Range can be found at [SHOTShowRangeDay.com](http://SHOTShowRangeDay.com).



## CCI Produces Commemorative Ruger 70th Anniversary Target Load

CCI Ammunition will commemorate Ruger's 70th Anniversary with a special 22 LR target load that will be available in stores this fall.

Sturm, Ruger & Co., Inc. is one of the nation's leading manufacturers of rugged, reliable firearms for the commercial sporting market. This year marks the iconic brand's 70th anniversary. To celebrate the milestone, CCI Ammunition and Ruger have teamed up to offer a commemorative Ruger 70th

Anniversary 22 LR Standard Velocity target load.

The ammunition features CCI's 40-grain lead round nose bullet, a 1,070 fps muzzle velocity and a unique Ruger headstamped case. It's packaged in limited-edition, 100-count boxes with Ruger logos and artwork. The loads are manufactured by CCI under a licensing agreement with Sturm, Ruger & Co., Inc., with a MSRP of \$9.99.

## 5.11 Tactical Opens 50th Company Owned Retail Store

5.11 Tactical recently celebrated the grand opening of its 50th company owned retail store in Fort Bliss, Texas. The store marks the completion of an initiative established in 2014 to launch and expand company-owned retail stores across the country. The beginning of the brand's robust retail expansion came in 2017 and 2018, with an average of two store openings per month. The brand continued its momentum into 2019 with six store openings since January. An estimated one to two store openings per month are planned for the remainder of the year and into 2020.

"Opening our 50th store celebrates an ambitious and sustainable streak of retail expansion," said 5.11's Senior Vice President of Retail, Jeff Roberts. "We've found that even as shopping becomes more digitized than ever, people value and seek out the level of personal interaction our 5.11 stores offer."

With its roots in servicing the law en-

forcement, first responder and military communities, 5.11 Tactical prides itself on seeking out and hiring former servicemen and women and veterans whenever possible. Each retail location carries head-to-toe apparel and gear for men and women including pants, shorts, shirts, outerwear, footwear, packs and bags, headwear, load-bearing equipment and tactical accessories. To date, 5.11 owns retail stores in 24 states, with larger metropolitan areas serving as a hub for several stores. 5.11 Fort Bliss joins the ranks as 5.11's eighth store in Texas.

5.11 products can be purchased online, through authorized dealers and retailers, as well as at 5.11 company-owned retail stores. To find a store location near you, visit [www.511tactical.com/store-locator](http://www.511tactical.com/store-locator).

Is this an outlier, or an indication that the market is moving toward more branded stores? Time will tell.

## Meopta Optika HD Binocular Line Now Shipping

The new Optika HD binocular line from Meopta USA Sport Optics is now shipping, with a special promotion for consumers through the end of 2019.

Available in 8x42 and 10x42, these lightweight, rugged, magnesium-alloy binoculars are encased in a newly designed shock-proof, rubber-armed exterior. The advanced HD lenses, combined with phase-correction and dielectric coatings, deliver incredible brightness, superior color fidelity, edge-to-edge sharpness and increased contrast, allowing hunters to see better in low light.

Optika HD binoculars feature Meopta's MeoShield anti-abrasion lens coatings and MeoDrop hydrophobic lens coatings which repel rain, dust, and grease from lens surfaces.

As a special launch promotion, consumers will receive an instant \$50 rebate on the purchase of these binoculars through Dec. 31, 2019, bringing their cost to under \$300. In 2020, retail pricing will be \$339.95 for the Optika HD 8x42 and \$349.95 for the 10x42 model.

## Hornady Shipping 350 Legend

Hornady's new 350 Legend 170-grain American Whitetail is now shipping to retailers in time for hunters to hit the range before deer seasons arrive. The new 350 Legend cartridge is designed for deer hunters to deliver maximum penetration from a modern, straight-walled cartridge. Hornady InterLock bullets feature exposed lead tips for controlled expansion and terminal performance. Bullets used in American Whitetail ammunition feature Hornady pioneering secant ogive design and exclusive InterLock ring – a raised ring inside the jacket that is embedded in the bullet's core that keeps the core and jacket locked together during expansion to retain mass and energy. **HR**





# Balancing Act:

## Dead Center Pro Bow Balancer

Adding bow balancing to your pro shop services might help you balance the books, too.

BY DARREN CHOATE

I first saw the Dead Center Pro Bow Balancer at the 2018 ATA Show. In fact, it was one of the most talked-about products that year. Oddly enough, this product is not one you are likely to stock in your store for consumers to purchase. Rather, the Pro Bow Balancer provides a new revenue stream from the increase in sales of stabilizers and their mounting accessories.

Since that first exposure to bow balancing, I have kept my ear to the ground with regard to the bow-balancing business by talking with several pro

shop owners periodically. It's true, having a tool for bow balancing has not hit the mainstream at this point. However, it is gaining momentum. Bow balancing is firmly planted within the target archery community, but hunters have also taken note of the pros of bow balancing and its effect on accuracy. Most notably, the pros include proper weight distribution to improve aiming, as well as lessening biased movement during recoil.

The good news: There's definitely room for an expansion of the hunting stabilizer market for the

↑ According to balancing expert Jim Ream of Dead Center Archery, longer axle-to-axle length bows are easier to balance than shorter ones, especially when using shorter hunting stabilizers.

**A first step might be to consider the Dead Center Pro Balancer as an addition to your pro shop services.”**

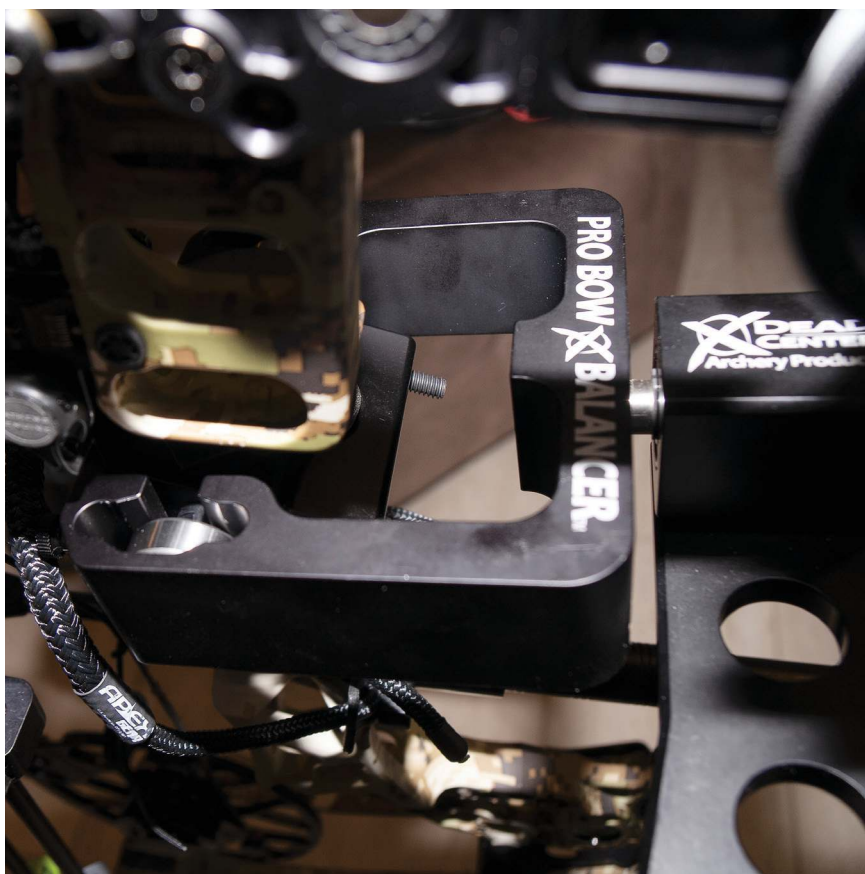
Products, started in 2007 with a basic aluminum target and hunting series stabilizers.

**DC:** When was the Dead Center Pro Bow Balancer released?

**JR:** Todd invented the Pro Bow Balancer in 2010 purely out of necessity. Todd recognized that there was no precise way of installing stabilizers and weights on a bow with any measure as to their effect. Any current method was simple guesswork. Todd wanted a way to see exactly what every stabilizer, weight and configuration was doing to the bow to have a true neutral starting point and for effective fine-tuning to help archers achieve optimum performance.

Over the years, the Pro Bow Balancer has made it into the hands of avid archers, pro archers, pro shops and archery coaches around the world. Users of the Pro Bow Balancer find it invaluable when

↓ The Pro Bow Balancer utilizes a universal cradle that attaches to the bow, allowing both front-to-back and left-to-right movement in a free-floating fashion.



willing pro shop to invest in. A first step might be to consider the Dead Center Pro Balancer as an addition to your pro shop services. Recently, I had the opportunity to chat in-depth with Dead Center's resident technical expert, Jim Ream, to get his take on the bow-balancing market. Here are his impressions.

**DC:** Tell us about the history of Dead Center Archery.

**JR:** Todd Reich, owner of Dead Center Archery





## HUNTING BOW STABILIZERS

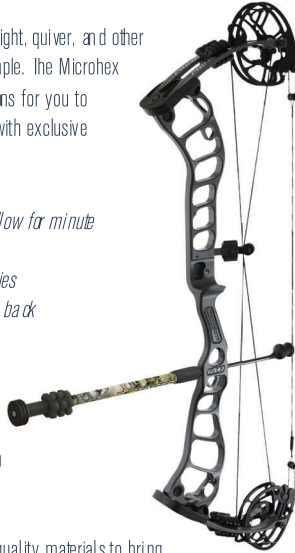
### Bee Stinger | Microhex Counter Slide

Achieving perfect balance and offsetting the weight of your sight, quiver, and other accessories has never been more accurate, adaptable, or simple. The Microhex Counter Slide with dovetail mount offers limitless configurations for you to customize the optimal balance for your customer. Microhex with exclusive Countervail Technology delivers 40 percent less vibration.

#### Specs

- Five individual 1-ounce weights and sliding bracket allow for minute adjustments to achieve perfect balance
- Offsets the weight of sight, quiver and other accessories
- Allows additional weight distribution both forward and back
- Available in 10-, 12- and 15-inch
- Available in Grey, Brown, Tan, Olive and Matte Black
- Comes with dovetail mount

MSRP: \$159.99 - \$179.99 | CONTACT: [www.beestinger.com](http://www.beestinger.com)



### Apex Gear | End Game

To give hunters the edge they need, End Game utilizes high-quality materials to bring the center of gravity farther forward where it is more effective. A strong and light carbon-fiber tube supports an adjustable end-weight system, allowing archers to tune the weight to match their bow. Included colored dampening rings provide a custom look while absorbing noise and vibration. Available in 6- or 8-inch model.

#### Specs

- Improves bow balance for better accuracy
- Lightweight carbon-fiber tube moves the center of gravity forward
- Adjustable weight system (6-, 7- or 8-ounce total weight) tunes your bow
- Engineered for high-performance hunting bows
- Dampening rings between weights absorb noise and vibration
- Seven different colored dampening rings included for a custom look
- Fits all bows



MSRP: \$52.99-\$58.99 | CONTACT: [www.apex-gear.com](http://www.apex-gear.com)

### Apex Gear | Outpost Dual Mount

The Outpost provides mounting for both a forward- and rear-facing stabilizer. The mount is all metal construction with an ambidextrous design for left and right side offset.

#### Specs

- Balance the bow by adding a rear stabilizer at any angle
- Ambidextrous design for left or right side offset
- All metal construction
- No-slip meshed teeth joints
- Corrects bow tilt and roll
- Laser-engraved angular markings
- Fits all stabilizers

MSRP: \$47.99 | CONTACT: [www.apex-gear.com](http://www.apex-gear.com)



setting up and tuning their stabilizer configurations.

**DC:** What tips do you have for archery retailers adding a bow balancer to their pro shop? Any tips on increasing revenue with it?

**JR:** If pro shops would add a Pro Bow Balancer to their shop services, the main thing I would recommend is to keep the Balancer visible to the public with a balanced bow in it. And when there are customers in the store, make it a point to walk by the Balancer and bump the bow so it will move and rotate, so the customer will get curious and ask some questions on it. They will then want their bow balanced.

Shops will sell more brackets and weights by having a Pro Bow Balancer.

**DC:** Please provide a few bow-balancing basics?

**JR:** You absolutely need a back bar. You cannot balance a bow without one. A good rule of thumb for a target setup is whatever you run on the front as far as stabilizers, run at least half that on the back. For example, if you run a 28-inch front bar, you want to run a 12-inch back bar. For weights, it's about a 1-to-3 ratio: if you run 3 ounces on the front, you will run around 9 ounces on the back.

For a hunting setup, this is where it gets a little tricky, and this balancing act depends a lot on the bow you are shooting, ATA, riser length, grip location, if the shooter is worried about mass weight, etc., since the bars will normally be under 10 inches. On my hunting setup I like to run a 10-inch with 1 to 2 ounces in the front, 8-inch in the back with 6 to 8 ounces of weight. This seems to work the best for me.

**DC:** How do sights and quivers affect bow balance?

**JR:** Sights and quivers are very important when it comes to bow balance. Let's start with the quiver: I recommend taking it off to balance your bow, shoot the bow in and when you get to your spot to hunt. Don't hunt with your quiver on. I know you're probably thinking arrows don't weigh that much, 400 to 500 grains. But every little bit of weight matters in your balance. And every time you remove an arrow from that quiver, it changes the whole system. You're better off not using it. Just use it to get your arrows in and out of the field.

**“The good news: There's definitely room for an expansion of the hunting stabilizer market for the willing pro shop to invest in.”**

Your sight is another story — you need that. The heavier the sight, the more of an angle to the left, for a right-handed shooter, you will need to adjust your back bar. This adjustment will be done with your back bar bracket. I recommend the Diamond Series Single Offset Mount or the Combo Mount.

**DC:** Is there a major difference balancing a longer axle-to-axle bow compared to a shorter one?

**JR:** Yes, there is a difference between balancing a longer ATA bow than a shorter ATA bow. The longer bow will be easier to balance, especially with shorter hunting-style stabilizers.

**DC:** In your opinion, what stabilizer system(s) work best for balancing?

**JR:** Target bars work best for balancing because of the length. They just make it easier to work with.

**DC:** What are the basic tools needed for bow-balancing work?

**JR:** The only tools you need to balance a bow is a set of Allen wrenches to tighten the brackets and weights down when you are done.

**DC:** How long does it take to become a proficient bow balancer?

**JR:** I say once you've balanced four to five bows of each brand. At that point, you know what they like and what to look for, and you should be proficient at it. **HR**



#### PRO STAFF

Darren Choate is an outdoor writer and photographer who lives and breathes hunting. As a professional hunting guide in Arizona and New Mexico, he pursued big game with clients for three decades. Choate is now the editor of *Bowhunting World*, as well as two other Grand View Outdoors publications, *Archery Business* and *Whitetail Journal*.

## Budget Balancing, Service Building

The challenges of shooting a bow are numerous and can be overwhelming for many archers. Modern bowhunters are looking for every advantage to make them more accurate on the range and in the field. The Pro Balancer provides a first-hand, visual representation to utilize while educating customers about the relationship of bow weight and balance with proper shot execution, and therefore accuracy. While doing so, you can put a few extra bucks in your bank account.

Chris DiPerna, owner of Creek Archery in Pennsylvania, estimates that his pro shop balances five bows per week with an average sale of \$200. Billy Gibson, owner of Broken Rack Archery in Ohio, sees similar numbers in his shop. When you do the math, the total is fairly large, even if you estimate it conservatively. The most popular overall stabilizer kit is one from Dead Center, the "Hunter Kit."

Dead Center Dead Level Hunter V2 Stabilizer Kit (8-inch and 6-inch)



Includes

- One 6-inch and one 8-inch V2 stabilizer
- Six 1-ounce weights
- Two aluminum cap weights
- Diamond series combo mount

MSRP: \$199.99

Of course, money isn't the end-all. Although a purchase occurs, both shop owners take pride in helping their local target archers and bowhunters become more proficient and ultimately successful in their endeavors. "Those who are serious about their craft are willing to spend the necessary dollar amount to have it set up correctly," DiPerna stated. "Some shooters are unaware that conditions like target panic can actually be remedied with a properly balanced bow," Gibson added. The takeaway: Selling more product while providing the utmost in customer service is a definite win-win.

## Target Bow Stabilizers



Dead Center Dead Steady Target Starter Pack (24-inch/10-inch)

Offers competitive target archers a complete kit with everything needed to precision balance and tune their target setup. The kit includes Dead Steady Stabilizers, Diamond Series hardware and customizable 1-ounce weights.

Featured Technology

- Dead Steady target stabilizers offer the proven performance and stability that competitive target archers demand.
- 3/4-inch-diameter pultruded carbon construction provides rigidity without added weight.
- Diamond Series hardware is precision engineered to offer infinite adjustability, rock-solid performance and perfect balance.
- Custom balance weights allow for the custom tailoring of the weight configuration for precision balance and tuning for an optimum aiming experience and increased accuracy.

Kit Includes:

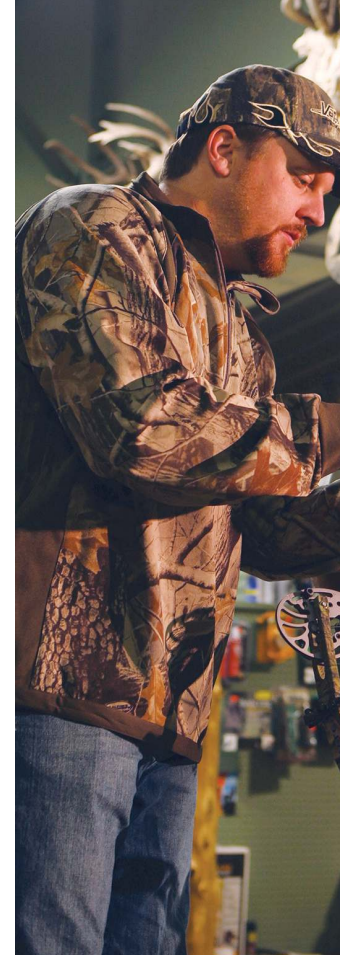
- Two Dead Steady Target Stabilizers: 24-inch 6.6-ounce and 10-inch 4.2-ounce
- One Diamond Series Combo Mount
- Six 1-ounce Custom Balance Weights, 1/4-20 threaded

MSRP: \$279.99 | CONTACT: [www.deadcenterarchery.com](http://www.deadcenterarchery.com)





Mitch Kezar/Windigo Images



# Developing Confident Customer Interaction

Shy or quiet sales associates aren't doomed to failure. They just have to learn how to come out of their shell.

BY PATRICK MEITIN

I had always been fairly shy around strangers. I wasn't one to chat up strangers in grocery-store lines, and I clung to people I knew during large social gatherings. I was never a slick talker in high school or college, turning into a stammering idiot when approached by a handsome lass or asking a girl to dance at a party. Public speaking always gave me the willies — it was a curse and a trait that no doubt negatively affected my business dealings.

Now, it's interesting to note I was a guide/outfit-

ter for 23 years and this problem never surfaced in that context. I could easily handle the most aggressive corporate overlord or world-renowned neurological surgeon with complete aplomb, despite the obvious fact that these people were definitely strangers at the beginning of every hunt.

But when my quality-engineer wife was unexpectedly laid off from a military contract job and our financial situation became dire, I was suddenly thrust into the environment of hunting retail as a

← Sales associates gain confidence by actually knowing what they're talking about. Whenever possible, your associates should be using the products you carry to get hands-on experience.

↑ An associate who's a natural introvert might assume that customers prefer to be left alone, but that's often not the case. Encourage them to be friendly without overdoing it.



## PRO STAFF

Patrick Meitin worked in various bow shops off and on while in high school and college. More recently he worked as a low-level manager in a regional sporting-goods chain as a salesman, employee scheduler and mechanize specialist. He has been heavily immersed in the archery and firearms trade for more than 30 years.



Michał Kozar/WinAgo Images

## “Combining thorough knowledge with an attitude of greeting like-minded friends turned things around for me.”

from a product and what it will be used for. Those factors absolutely dictate any sale. This only happens through relaxed, give-and-take conversation.

Like many revelations, I had to make a conscious decision to change. I reminded myself customers don't walk through the doors unless they're looking for something from us, that I was truly there to help (not just draw a paycheck and scam some commission), and perhaps most of all, that these were customers with whom I had a lot in common. They were seeking the stuff that continually occupies all dedicated hunters' minds — guns and ammo, bows and arrows, knives, camo and boots, scent-control products, stands, blinds, decoys and so forth. In other words, they had arrived to marvel at the goods that I, as a diehard hunter, contemplated on a daily basis.

I also reached deep to retrieve a confidence I had overlooked. It was the same confidence that had carried me through all those years of guiding powerful people — I knew a lot they did not, or they wouldn't have sought my services. I concluded that as a hard-core bowhunter, varmint shooter and general outdoorsman, I had thoroughly tested much of the product we stocked and had learned what worked and what did not. I had solid advice to offer. I had more real-world, hands-on hunting experience than the vast majority of the customers arriving on our doorstep. I truly did have something to offer. The fact I regularly produced in-depth write-ups on much of the hunting gear in our displays also greatly boosted confidence.

Combining that thorough knowledge with an attitude of greeting like-minded friends turned things around for me. Within two months I'd become one of the store's top salesman, adding \$350 to \$450 additional dollars to each bimonthly paycheck. Once over the hump, my job became infinitely easier. Wifey found it hilarious when I began chatting up strangers in grocery-store lines and at gas pumps. Social familiarity had dissolved my shy demeanor.

How you find that social acumen will likely differ from my route, but there is no way around the fact that customers are strongly drawn to friendly confidence. Some sales associates are natural talkers, “social butterflies” who jump right in. Others might need to make a concerted effort to better understand the product they sell by studying manufacturer literature. Now I'm certainly not suggesting abject arrogance, which should be avoided at all costs. No one likes the haughty know-it-all, especially those who talk down to people — the gun-counter curmudgeon who scoffs at any preference not mirroring his own, or the employee who infers how obtuse a customer is and how all-knowing they are. Remember, this should be no different than addressing old friends.

This friendly, honest confidence — no matter if you are an independent shop owner or an entry-lever sales-floor grunt — is guaranteed to snowball sales and commissions if you earn them. After a year in that sporting goods store, I became the go-to guy many repeat customers sought out when contemplating major purchases. This further expanded my take-home pay, but it also reflected well on the store. This is the epitome of customer service and what sets your store apart from other outlets and keeps cash registers singing.

Our financial circumstances eventually turned around, and I left that retail setting to return to my preferred vocation. Yet that retail experience has stuck with me. I'm now completely relaxed while talking to most strangers, namely people in a position to relinquish largess. With debilitating shyness left in the rearview mirror, doors began swinging wide open in other areas of my professional life. **HR**

second job, and that shyness came rushing back in force. Serving folks on the sales floor (answering equipment questions, offering suggestions, playing the salesman bit) while also dealing with occasional problem customers as a low-level manager gave me cold sweats. But we received commission for all sales (and we needed every dollar I could garner to keep the mortgage current) and I had been put in a position of calming disgruntled customers and reaching a quick and satisfactory solution for all involved. I had no choice but to break out of my shell.

This was excruciating in the beginning. I lived with the general attitude that most customers really wanted to be left alone and felt that actually selling was a mild form of harassment. And I was painfully shy, as I've said. But I had a job to do. Not only had I been hired on the supposed strength of my people skills (gained through those years of guiding), but all sales were tracked and poor performance meant a potential pink slip. It was a traumatic experience for a hermit who had always lived in the boonies and worked alone.

I first had to learn to relax, to get used to the notion of approaching and chatting up complete strangers. An effective sales approach means first putting customers at complete ease, instilling a trust that allows them to open up and tell you precisely what they are looking for, what they expect





# 7 Highly Effective Field-Dressing Kits for Successful Hunters

Field-dressing kits bring in customers. Answering field-dressing questions brings them back.

BY KEVIN REESE

Just a century or so ago, venison was a dietary staple for many throughout the U.S. For millennia before that, hunting and gathering was essentially the primary method of obtaining food. Of course, time is a compromise for most of us in our

modern, largely industrial civilization. Fortunately, side benefits to living in the here and now are technology and innovation, but at the same time, the hunting skillset seems to erode little by little, generation after generation, and with it, our numbers.

↑ In addition to stocking a variety of knife options, be sure someone on your staff is available to answer customer questions about which type of knife is right for which jobs.



## PRO STAFF

Kevin is an award-winning outdoor writer, Marine Corps veteran and avid hunter. His favorite pursuits include feral hogs with a bow or with a thermal scope and AR-style rifle in his home state of Texas. Of course, he also loves deer, elk, turkey, duck and dove hunting – and the list continues to grow.



**“Offering purpose-built products that help make game processing easier is a great way to get customers in your door. Helping them understand why and how to use these tools ensures their return.”**

As hunters, one of our most important tasks is field dressing. Proper (or improper) game care in the field certainly plays a part in our overall health, as well as the flavor and texture of the meat. Unfortunately, lack of knowledge and/or skill in this area has driven more than a few from our ranks. This is an area where we must bear some responsibility as communicators and retailers to promote our outdoor heritage, share what we know, and, yes, embrace today’s innovative products and technologies designed to enhance outdoor experiences. After all, hunting in this new age certainly has its benefits, and given a constraint like time in a working world (where less and less time is actually our own), doesn’t learning about new or better tools and methods make sense?

Offering purpose-built products that help make game processing easier is a great way to get customers through your door. Helping them understand why and how to use these tools ensures their return. Even better, it keeps them in our ranks; that’s good for both our heritage and our industry. Here are seven highly effective field dressing kits you should consider offering your clientele.

### Camo Case Caliber XX-Changer

When it comes to legacies, brand recognition and field dressing, the Camo Case Caliber XX-Changer, complete with a ballistic nylon sheath, seems like a must-have knife system. After all, Case’s legacy for handcrafting heirloom-quality knives is the result of generational fit, form, function and jaw-dropping aesthetics. My own Pop’s collection, including a hunting knife previously owned by my grandfather, is a great example of Case’s legacy-driven reputation. Heck, throughout my childhood, Pop routinely quipped, “You should always carry a good knife.” with a Case in his hand.

I’m not alone in my appreciation for Case knives or the reputation they’ve established over the past 130 years — they make phenomenal knives. So, when it comes to hunting and processing meat in the field, a lone hunting knife aside, it’s great to see Case step up with a system that not only holds fast



← Camo Case Caliber XX-Changer



↓ Havalon Talon Hunt Knife Set



to the traditional Case look and feel, but warms up to new-age innovation, too.

Perfectly suited to handle field-processing tasks on everything from crappie to bull moose, the Camo Case Caliber XX-Changer is a lightweight 5-inch folder composed of a single synthetic camouflaged handle and four Tru-Sharp surgical stainless steel interchangeable blades — drop point, clip, fillet, boning and bone saw. The tip of the bone saw can even be used as a screwdriver. The Camo Case Caliber XX-Changer field dressing kit includes a ballistic nylon sheath with individual blade pockets.

### Havalon Talon Hunt Knife Set

Touted by countless hunting blade aficionados as having the sharpest blades on the market, Havalon Knives has grown rapidly since coming to light in 2005.





Born of Havel's scalpel-sharp offerings in the 1980s, ultra-popular with taxidermists, Havalon's brand launch was the result of catering specifically to outdoor enthusiasts looking for the next top-shelf cutting tools. Jumping to Havalon's current position, the company is a true leader in hunting knife performance, especially with respect to the Talon Hunt kit and the company's new Quick-Change II Interchangeable Cutlery System.

While the Talon Hunt is specifically designed for field dressing and meat processing, Havalon does offer Talon kits for other activities, and all blades are compatible with all Talon kit handle sets. With the Quick Change II system, blades are changed with the press of a button and the back panel is removable for easy cleaning — a feature I love!

The Talon Hunt Kit comes with two 3.5-inch gut hook combo blades, a 5-inch fillet blade, a 3.5-inch semi-serrated bone saw blade, two rubber-molded and slip-resistant handles and a compact nylon roll pack designed for easy carry.



↑ Hunting Made Easy (HME) Three-Piece Field Kit

### Hunting Made Easy (HME) Three-Piece Field Kit

Not long ago, HME blew into the outdoor industry scene seemingly from out of nowhere and instantly garnered industry media buzz, most particularly because of innovative, truly functional product designs — a great thing considering the outdoor space is quite saturated with gimmicky products lacking truly beneficial functionality. While HME's entire product line rightly turns heads and can certainly get more customers in your door, their Three-Piece Field Kit is definitely worth some prime shelf space.

The HME Three-Piece Field Kit is constructed of 420HC stainless steel and specifically designed to handle virtually any wildlife species you choose to take down without compromising field-dressing safety. The kit includes a T-handled 8.75-inch bone saw; 7.5-inch fixed-blade, drop-point caping knife; and a 9.5-inch fixed-blade, drop-point knife complete with a gut hook.

While all three tools boast slip-resistant thermoplastic rubber (TPR) grips and a corrosive-resistant black oxide coating that also reduces dulling, the bone saw features a blunt tip designed to minimize risks of puncturing the bladder or intestines. A nylon sheath is included for easy carry in a pack or on a belt.



← 12 Survivors Bare Bones and Skin N' Bones Kits

### 12 Survivors Bare Bones and Skin N' Bones Kits

12 Survivors produces two lightweight, skeletonized field dressing kits well worth consideration for your hunting inventory: a robust Skin N' Bones eight-piece kit capable of making short work of



big game on virtually any continent and a compact Bare Bones three-piece field-dressing kit, composed of some of the same tools included in the larger set and perfect for processing mid-sized animals like deer and feral hogs. The Skin N' Bones Kit includes gloves and a carrying case, while the Bare Bones Kit features a piggy-back sheath complete with an integrated sharpener.

Both 12 Survivors kits feature drop-point-style gut-hook and caping knives constructed of 5Cr15MOV stainless steel with slip-resistant Defense Grip coating. The Skin N' Bones kit also comes with a fillet knife, bone saw and ribcage spreader.

### Outdoor Edge RazorPro Saw Combo

When it comes to field dressing kits, Outdoor Edge has maintained quite a track record as an industry leader. Their focus on innovation and reputation for producing products that perform and last continues to drive hunters of all experience levels to choose Outdoor Edge's array of knife kits season after season.

More recently, Outdoor Edge's patented replacement razor blade system has earned notable buzz, and the design has turned once bulky knife kits into

→ Outdoor Edge RazorPro Saw Combo



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**“Proper (or improper) game care in the field certainly plays a part in our overall health as well as the flavor and texture of meat...”**

single-handed, multi-tasking knife sets compact enough to attach to your belt or throw in a cargo pocket — the RazorPro Saw Combo is a great example.

Designed for compact carry in a single nylon sheath with a hook-and-loop enclosure, the RazorPro Saw Combo is composed of just two handled tools and multiple replacement blades. One tool boasts both a gutting blade and a replacement-razorblade knife set in a blaze-orange, rubberized TPR handle. The other tool is a bone saw with a triple-ground tooth pattern, perfect for cutting through pelvic bones and sternums. The gutting blade is designed to open a body cavity quickly and efficiently while also eliminating the risk of puncturing a bladder or digestive organs. A black oxide holder keeps razor-sharp blades set while allowing for quick change-outs with the push of a button.

**Gerber Moment Kit IV**

Founded in 1939, Gerber, an Oregon-based manufacturer, has sharpened the knife industry’s leading edge of innovation with multi-tasking cutting tools for generations and their Moment IV Field Dressing Kit is the epitome of the brand’s reputation. I’m not sure a huntable species exists anywhere on Earth that is incapable of being reduced to meal-size portions under Gerber’s razor-sharp blades, and the Moment IV comes with everything one might need to handle such tasks.

The Gerber Moment IV Kit boasts an 8.6-inch drop-point knife complete with a gut hook, 7.5-inch T-handled bone saw, 7.1-inch caping knife and an anodized aluminum rib spreader. While the two knives are constructed of 5Cr15MoV stainless steel, the saw blade boasts SK5 steel and a blunt tip to prevent bladder and intestine punctures. All Moment IV tools are designed with full tangs and slip-resistant, nylon-core, rubber-molded handles and store in a compact, soft-sided nylon case.

**Buck Knives PakLite Field Master Kit**

Like the fine knives they have built for more than 117 years, Buck Knives was forged by the hands of young Hoyt Buck, a blacksmith in Kansas.



↑ Gerber Moment Kit IV

Like an heirloom knife, Hoyt handed Buck down to his son, Al, who passed it on to Chuck in the early '60s. Soon after, in 1963, Buck developed the famed Model 110 folding knife and unveiled it in early 1964. While Buck Knives’ legacy began in 1902, it was the 110 that secured Buck’s future, or at least the company’s ability to remain relevant and grow over the 56 years since.

Like a fine wine, Buck seems to get better with age, and the PakLite Field Master Kit is modern-day proof that Buck innovation is alive and well. The PakLite Field Master Kit is composed of three cutting tools — a Model 135 PakLite Caper, Model 499 PakLite Guthook and the Model 141 Large Skinning knife. All PakLite Field Master Kit knives are skeletonized for weight, traction coated and constructed of rugged, razor-sharp 420HC stainless steel. The nylon sheath features removable liners for easy cleaning, zippered pockets and an adjustable belt strap. **HR**

↓ Buck Knives PakLite Field Master Kit



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# OUTFITTING UPLAND BIRD HUNTERS

Whether your customers pursue grouse, pheasant, quail or other upland birds, they're going to have some specific gear needs that you can help fill.

BY BILL MILLER

In yesteryear, the appeal of upland bird hunting was the simplicity. You threw a handful of shells into the pocket of your jacket — the same one you wore duck hunting — shouldered your one-and-only all-round pump gun, whistled up the dog and walked to the edge of town. In the endless expanse of farm fields, you found pheasants, quail, doves and Huns mixed with rabbits and squirrels in the right cover. A perfect way to spend an hour or two after work or school.

How things have changed. Today, many upland hunts are destination hunts. Hunters need to plan vacation, travel logistics, access, coordination with

hunting companions, dog training and care and more. For the majority of today's hunters, even a weekend bird hunting trip is an expedition requiring serious support.

That's where you come in. Upland hunting today is a gear-intensive pursuit. With a bit of forethought, it's one on which you can cash in. Allowing for some seasonal variation, upland bird hunters have similar requirements regardless of which species they pursue. That's more good news in determining what you should carry in your store.

The overall theme of gear for hunting upland birds of any type and in any cover is lightweight.

← All upland hunters, regardless of species, will want durable game vests with orange panels and generous pouches for carrying birds and gear.



**“While some uplanders require lauded brand names to make a statement, far more are about good design and value.”**

In walk-them-up upland hunting, you pretty much need to carry all your gear.

Lightweight starts from the ground up — namely hunting boots. In addition to being light, upland hunters’ boots are different from others. Upland hunting is an active sport. You’re nearly always walking, usually at a faster pace. There are seldom long periods of inactivity. For this reason, upland boots don’t require much, if any, insulation. Additionally, only in rare circumstances (like

hunting chukars or ptarmigan) is there much rock climbing or super steep terrain. Lug or air bob soles are not required. In fact, they’re a detriment when they collect mud, adding weight to every step.

By definition, uplands are not wetlands, but it’s amazing how much water one walks through on a grouse and woodcock hunt, a pheasant hunt, or even quail hunt. While your customers likely won’t be standing around in water, some degree of waterproofness is nearly always appreciated.

To cater to upland bird hunters, you should always carry several brands and models of lightweight, non-insulated, moderately treaded boots in both waterproof and non-waterproof designs. And if you’re in snake country, also carry knee-high snake boots — quail hunters are notorious for not looking where they put their feet in the excitement

↓ What about dog gear? High-tech e-collars are popular, and many hunters will want the GPS option to keep track of their dogs.





of a pointed covey.

Moving up the body, the next nearly universal requirement is brush pants. It's difficult to find pants that are lightweight but still able to deflect sharp briars and thorns. Most hunters look for a compromise, but some seek the heaviest fabrics, weight be damned. They know the sting of blackberry brambles!

Brush chaps are a great alternative. They are generally lighter than pants of the same protection level, convenient and less costly. They also offer the comfortable option of hunting while wearing your favorite jeans.

When it comes to upland hunting clothing, noth-

↑ Brush pants and chaps will sell to upland hunters. Toughness is the key attribute, but light weight is appreciated, too.

→ Every upland hunter needs a shotgun. While beautiful over-and-unders and side-by-sides will probably never go out of style, do-it-all semi-autos are more popular than ever.

**“For the majority of today’s hunters, even a weekend bird hunting trip is an expedition requiring serious support. That’s where you come in.”**

ing is more iconic than the hunting jacket or vest. Choices are wide ranging. Everyone who makes active outdoor clothing offers one or more. While some uplanders require lauded brand names to make a statement, far more are about good design and value.

A bird jacket or vest should have a place to carry birds. The pouch is at the rear, and on better models it comes around the sides to carry a bigger load and balance it comfortably. Most offer some kind of blood-proof lining, though breathability is more important for maintaining quality of the meat.

Shotshell loops and ample pockets should be conveniently positioned on the sides and front of



iStockPhoto/Dave Jeffries



the vest. The best shell loops are elastic so they can accommodate a variety of gauges and hold shells securely when crawling under fences. The shell loops should be covered with ample pocket flaps that can be secured with snaps or hook-and-loop fasteners but can be easily accessed when shooting gets fast.

A specified amount of blaze orange is a legal requirement for upland hunting in most states. Jacket and vest designers incorporate it as a fashion element, but you should know the regulations in your area to make certain the garments you're selling have enough to be legal. More is better, as no one was ever ticketed for too much blaze orange.

One of the most difficult garment items for upland bird hunters to find is just-right gloves. Tactical gloves are everywhere these days, but they're not just right for bird hunters. The best wingshooting gloves are fine leather and fit snugly but not tightly. Most important is dexterity in the fingertips for unloading, loading and operating safeties. Leather guards against thorns and brambles far better than fabric. Glove brands best suited to upland-



## A Selection of Quality, Affordable Bird-Hunting Boots

Footwear prices seem to have gone crazy. It's nothing these days to spend \$100 on a pair of decent athletic or walking shoes. The same is true of upland bird hunting boots. It's not hard to spend \$400 or more on lightweight hunting boots.

Your customers appreciate you searching out the best value. Here's a cross-section of upland boots to serve them well without requiring a second mortgage on the hunting cabin.

### IRISH SETTER WINGSHOOTER

Many hunters consider the Irish Setter Wingshooter to be the classic upland hunting boot. Today they are available in three colors and include one model sized specifically for women.

- Includes eight non-insulated models and one insulated model
- 7-inch and 9-inch ankle heights • UltraDry waterproof construction
- Irish Setter Prairie sole provides excellent traction that won't collect mud
- Goodyear welt construction

MSRP: \$179.99 - \$219.99



### IRISH SETTER WINGSHOOTER SIDE ZIP

Especially in quail country, side-zip boots are often the preferred choice for style and comfort.

- Same classic Irish Setter Wingshooter style and construction
- Handsome buckle and side zip for easy on/off convenience
- Supple, rich brown leather and black Prairie outsole with tonal stitching

MSRP: \$194.99



### LACROSSE UPLANDER

Rubber bottom pacs are the preferred upland boot for many. While the original is a proprietary brand, the Lacrosse Uplander offers all the same features and quality — no beans about it.

- Full lace-up design • Just 3.4 pounds per pair
- Natural rubber bottom vulcanized to never split from the upper
- Rope cleated treat for all-terrain traction without collecting mud
- Full-grain oiled leather upper

MSRP: \$130

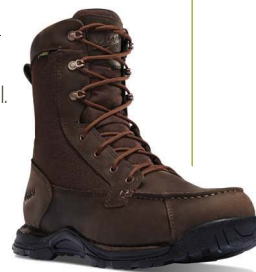


### DANNER SHARPTAIL

Gaining fame as the ultimate "high tech" upland hunting boot is the Danner Sharptail. This isn't your granddad's upland boot — and nobody wants it to be.

- Full-grain leather and 900 Denier nylon upper
- Gore-Tex (GTX) 100 percent waterproof/breathable liner
- Sharptail outsole for solid traction
- Terra Force platform for exceptional support and stability
- Just 3.2 pounds per pair

MSRP: \$190



### DANNER SHARPTAIL SNAKE BOOT

Where snakes lurk, you'll happily trade off some weight for protection. Danner Sharptail Snake Boots are 17 inches tall and have all the features of the bird-hunting models — plus the snake protection Southern and prairie hunters need.

- Full-grain leather and 900 Denier nylon upper
- Gore-Tex (GTX) 100 percent waterproof/breathable liner
- Sharptail outsole for solid traction
- 360-degree Snake Guard
- Rear gusset and durable hardware for adjustable fit

MSRP: \$280





## “Classic” Upland Shotguns; circa 2019

Upland hunting scenes are the subject of so much classic sporting art. However, were those scenes updated to 2019, the hunters' gear would look very different — especially the shotguns. To day's hunters want lightweight, reliable, easy-to-care for shotguns. Thankfully, there are plenty from which to choose. Here's a sample of some of the most popular.



### FRANCHI AFFINITY 3 SEMI-AUTO SHOTGUN

This semi-auto may legitimately lay claim to being the best long-term value in shotguns today. Available in many configurations, including basic black, wood, and many camo patterns, it's a shotgun a beginner can definitely learn with and live with for a long time to come.

- Available in 12-gauge and 20-gauge models • 20 gauge weighs as little as 6 pounds
- True lefthand design is available • Inertia Driven System and TSA recoil pad make it easy shooting for anyone

**MSRP:  
Starting  
at \$789**



### BENELLI SUPER BLACK EAGLE 3

In the days of old, if a guy owned a single shotgun to do it all, chances are it was a pump gun, probably something like an 870. Today, if a hunter owns one shotgun for everything from geese to doves to pheasants, chances are it's a Benelli Black Eagle of some vintage.

- 12 gauge chambered for 2¾-, 3-, and 3½-inch shells • Available in no less than seven stock finish options
- Barrel lengths ranging from 24 to 28 inches, including a rifled slug barrel option • Comes with custom-fitted hard gun case
- Comes with a cylinder bore choke tube which can excel in upland applications • Available in lefthand models

**MSRP:  
Starting  
at \$1,899**



### WEATHERBY SA-08 SYNTHETIC

For customers seeking a real bargain in a quality semi-automatic shotgun, the Weatherby SA-08 is one to consider. Many young, aspiring bird hunters are starting out with an SA-08 because of the price and shooting it for many years to come because of the reliability.

- 12- and 20-gauge 3-inch models available • 20 gauge is only 6 pounds; 12 gauge just half a pound more
- CNC machined aircraft grade aluminum receiver • Synthetic and wood-stocked models
- Drop out trigger system for easy maintenance • Dual valve gas system helps reduce felt recoil

**MSRP: \$649**



### BERETTA 686 ONYX PRO FIELD 28 GAUGE

There are still a few hunters left who are looking for an upland gun and gauge that's something different — a timeless classic. Beretta combines those attributes in the 686 Onyx Pro Field 28 Gauge. It's not an inexpensive gun by most standards, but sometimes a guy (or gal) just wants something special.

- Built on true, scaled-down action for 28 gauge
- Oil-finished stock with deep cut checkering • Schabel forend for classic look and feel
- 28-inch barrel • Glossy blued metal finish

**MSRP: \$3,100**



### MOSSBERG FLEX 500 SUPER BANTAM – ALL PURPOSE

As Mossberg celebrates its 100th anniversary, moms and dads may want to consider a starter shotgun from this giant in the firearms world. The 500 pump is a classic, but now it's updated with Mossberg's FLEX system, which allows toolless conversion of stock configurations as the youth grows and wishes to try different types of shotgunning.

- Bantam sizing with 12½-inch length of pull • Easily converts as young shooter grows
- 22-inch barrel perfect for tight cover shooting in youthful hands • 20 gauge weighs 6½ pounds, which helps reduce felt recoil
- Front and rear beads to help promote good mounting consistency

**MSRP: \$454**

ers include Bob Allen and Filson. Both have lined and unlined versions.

Moving farther up, we get to eye and ear protection, both needed by upland hunters. Not only do shooting glasses protect eyes from shotshell blowback and enhance vision under varying light conditions, but they also shield eyes from branches and thorns as a hunter moves through cover. Many hunters will reach for bargain-basement shooting glasses, but that's a great opportunity for your team to share the advantages of interchangeable, hardened lenses and the durability and versatility of quality frames.

In reality, not many hunters wear hearing protection in the field. They feel it's a disadvantage when it comes to hearing dogs and fellow hunters. That is until they are introduced to in-the-ear devices that block gunshots but enhance low-level sounds. This kind of protection actually makes you a better, safer hunter. Consider carrying at least one model of electronic hearing protection.

The nearly literal cherry on top is a blaze orange hat. Even in states that don't require blaze orange on the body, blaze worn on the head is usually mandatory — and it's a good idea even if it isn't required. Your shop should offer a variety of blaze hats, caps, beanies and toques, in addition to the promos with your name, logo and contact info. When hunters stop to grab a box of ammo en route to the local shooting preserve, ask if they remembered their blaze hat. Those who didn't will invariably buy one — maybe two, to keep a spare in the truck.

The other gear, universal to all upland hunters, is shotguns and ammunition. Along the same theme, the most-sought shotguns will be light and quick handling. These might not be the best for developing solid wingshooting technique, but at the end of a day when you've hiked 12 miles to get your three pheasants, you'll be glad you picked a light gun over a heavy one.

Inexperienced hunters will nearly always seek out whatever ammo is the cheapest, but that creates another opportunity for your team to explain the virtues of purpose-designed shotshells. For example, Federal's Prairie Storm line of pheasant shells offers many advantages a hunter might not recognize until they think them through. Sincere testimony of personal experience with quality ammo will make the sale.

When the hunt is over, more gear is required. Responsible hunters follow the creed, "At day's end, you take care of your dogs, your game, your guns and yourself — in that order!"

Outfitting hunting dog owners is an entire article unto itself, but you should consider carrying and training your staff on at least the basics. Leads,

collars, collapsible water and feed bowls, protective blaze vests in plenty of sizes, tick repellent and curry-type brushes are the place to start. Every hunter should carry a comprehensive canine first aid kit, which should be replaced every few seasons.

When it comes to collars, consider carrying a selection of electronic collars. The latest incorporate GPS right into the units. Heavy cover hunters who run pointing dogs are especially fond of them, as they allow you to locate a locked-down dog without the incessant beeping suspected of harming dogs' hearing. For fabric collars, how about working with a local embroiderer to become a purchase point for custom collars?

Taking care of bagged birds requires gear, too. Game shears are a biggie. Many are simply junk. Stock quality shears that will last, and teach your team to relay the advantages of spending a little more. Add some bird-sized hunting knives to the big-game knives in your displays, too. Through the heart of the bird seasons, consider stocking miscellaneous items hunters often forget — like gallon freezer bags.

Next on the list is taking care of the guns. Two items are most important: Gun cases and field cleaning kits. Gun cases are definitely a case of "you get what you pay for." Cheap cases do little more than comply with the law. Seams don't last. Zippers always split. They hold rust-inducing moisture next to the gun. Stock quality cases that are a good value and explain it to your customers.

Any of your customers who travel to hunt should have well-fitted hard-sided gun cases. This is really a case of quality serving better. The guns of bird hunters who can afford to travel often represent significant investments. A quality hard-side case is inexpensive protection.

While cable cleaners like Bore Boss are popular and useful, they are not what hunters should carry in the field. A field gun care kit needs a collapsible solid rod stout enough to push mud or other obstruction out of the bore.

Leave taking care of themselves up to the hunters. You can recommend where to find a hot shower, a good steak and a good night's sleep, but you can't stock or sell them. **HR**

**“The overall theme of gear for hunting upland birds of any type and in any cover is lightweight.”**



**PRO STAFF** - Bill Miller is a lifelong upland bird hunter blessed to hunt across North America. His working career has combined communications, marketing, retail sales, hunting, wingshooting, and bird dogs. He still follows his dogs into the field every season.





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# RANGEFINDING SIGHT OPTIONS

Bowhunters looking to upgrade their sights might be in the market for one of the new rangefinding sights. Here are three options to offer them.

BY ZACH BOWHAY

**T**o me it seems like only yesterday brass pins or fine wire crosshairs were the cutting-edge technology in bow sights. Fast-forward 25 years and now, your bow sight not only measures the distance to your target for you, but also puts a dot in your sight window for that exact shooting distance. These sights are nothing short of amazing, but there is a little more to them than a regular bow sight. For some, they can be intimidating, and they can also be quite expensive. Today's

hunter craves the latest and greatest technology, so they will no doubt keep growing in popularity. Here I want to show you a few options that are currently available and give you some of the features within each of these models so you can adequately inform your customers who are interested in this type of setup.

## **Garmin Xero A1i (\$999)**

Two years ago, Garmin captured the attention of everyone at the ATA show in Indianapolis with



→ Garmin's original Xero

← The technology in these sights is amazing, but it can be intimidating – and it comes at a price. Educate yourself and your sales staff on the benefits of rangefinding sights to inform and potentially upsell customers.



gives you a range to your target, the sight then automatically displays an LED aiming point to use for your shot.

The silent button trigger is installed on the front of your bow handle where your hand naturally rests, so you can quickly and quietly range targets with minimal movement.

The Xero A1i also has a great leveling system. There are blinking lights away from the aiming point that let you know

if your bow is canted. If the top pin is blinking, the bow is canted to the right; if the bottom is blinking, the bow is canted to the left.

The sight does project the pins onto a glass lens, but the lens is unmagnified. The target side of the lens is glass that is easily cleaned, water repellent and anti-reflective. The archer side is water-repellant, easy-clean glass but is 20-percent reflective. Light is not projected toward the target at any time. As far as the projected pins

the release of the Xero A1 sight. The new Xero A1i is an improved version of the original with a couple of great new features.

With the touch of a button, the A1i provides the shooter with an angle-compensated distance out to 100 yards and out to 300 yards on reflective targets. This can be done either at full draw or at rest, which virtually eliminates having to carry a separate rangefinder. Once your sight





go, each individual can decide between green and red pins. Pin brightness is automatically set via the on-board ambient light sensor, or it can be done manually if so desired. For those times when the shot is rushed, you might set a stack of fixed LED pins as well. This stack can be moved up or down within the window for each individual archer's needs.

The Xero A1i has an aluminum housing and weighs a manageable 14.7 ounces. It also has a battery life of up to one year and runs off two lithium AA batteries.

The biggest improvement over the original Xero A1 is the ability to load up to 10 different arrow profiles within it. That means a customer can sight in several different arrows and weights and then just toggle to the arrow of their choosing, depending on what they are shooting or hunting, and their sight will be on target.

Another cool feature is the practice mode, where the sight tracks your shots and distances while you are shooting. This info is not a make-or-break feature, but being able to track exactly what you are doing within the sight is a fun plus. Lastly, one very neat feature is the ability to pair the sight with other compatible devices like Garmin watches and GPS units. When you are in the field, it will track and show you not only where you shot from, but also where the target was when the shot was taken.

## Burris Oracle (\$830)

its new Oracle laser rangefinding sight. Like the

Garmin, the Oracle ranges targets with the touch of a button, but the Burris is capable of ranging deer out to 200 yards and reflective targets out to 500 yards.

However, unlike the Garmin where the ranged distance is projected on to a glass lens, the Burris has no glass. There is a thin, solid post that runs vertically through the entire sight window. This post has many small LED lights, and the proper spot lights up to give you the perfect aiming point for the ranged distance. The Oracle also has a built-in inclinometer to compensate for shot angles, whether up or down.

This sight also has a quiet and simple push button that is easily installed on the front of the grip, so the archer can get ranges easily without making a lot of movement. The bubble level system is like most of today's bow sights, where there is simply a level installed on the bottom of the sight window.

A unique feature of the Oracle is the rear sight, which mounts on the back of the sight. This aids in a few things. First, it eliminates the need for a peep in your string, and that in itself drastically improves low-light visibility. With the rear sight, you can also see inconsistency in your form, like torquing your bow handle.

↓ Garmin's Xero A1i



↓ Burris Oracle







“Overall, each of these sights are very impressive, but they all come with their standout features as well as potential drawbacks.”

The Oracle also has a built-in 20-yard fixed pin. You use this pin while going through the process of setting up your sight, but it is always there — meaning that if the sight fails or the battery dies, you will always at least have a 20-yard pin.

Compatible with arrow speeds from 200 to 420 fps, the Oracle will store two different trajectory curves for different arrows and/or draw weights. Made from an aluminum housing, the sight weighs 17 ounces. It also has second- and third-axis adjustments and has locking micro-adjust knobs for tuning the sight. The sight can also be easily adapted for a right- or left-handed

### Know Before You Go

Every hunter is responsible to know before they go. Some states do not allow the use of illuminated pins, while others do not allow electronics of any type to be attached to a bow while hunting. It is each hunter's responsibility to check the hunting regulations in the states they intend to hunt to make sure their equipment is legal.

It's a good idea to know your local laws so you can inform your customers.



↑ The Burris Oracle illuminates a small LED light at proper aiming spot.





shooter. The sight runs off of CR123 batteries, and 1,000 to 2,000 activations can be expected per battery.

**“Now, your bow sight not only measures the distance to your target for you, but also puts a dot in your sight window for that exact shooting distance.”**

### **IQ Define Pro (\$550)**

Also new for 2019 is the IQ Define Pro 7-Pin sight. The main improvement of the Pro from the past Define models is the ability of the sight to range out to 150 yards compared to 99 yards of past models.

Unlike other sights mentioned thus far, the IQ Define Pro is much more like standard sights in that it has multiple (seven) fixed pins. You sight your pins in just as you would on any other bow sight at the distances you desire. After aligning the laser rangefinder to your point of impact on your 20-yard pin, the rangefinder gives you a reading to the side of your pins. You must take that distance, pick the correct pin, and shoot for that distance. Again, the IQ rangefinder does not give you an exact aiming point like the other two mentioned sights; it simply gives the distance at which to aim.

Like the other sights, the rangefinder is run with a trigger/button that is attached to the front of your bow grip. Once you press the button, the sight goes into a two-minute scan mode where you can range different targets. After two minutes, the sight goes back into standby mode and you must press the button again to continue ranging. This is simply a failsafe to keep the battery from dying. The Define Pro has an OLED display with blue yardage and a yellow battery indicator.

If you are familiar with other IQ sights, this model has the popular Retina Lock. This is another feature that dramatically helps to reduce torque and helps maintain consistent hand placement from shot to shot. You tune the sight specifically to your shooting style by moving a small black dot into the middle of the larger green dot. Doing this every shot assures everything is the same with each shot for increased accuracy.

For setup, a red dot actually projects a red dot

→ The IQ Define Pro features seven fixed pins that you can sight in at whatever distances you prefer, as you would on a traditional sight.



→ The IQ Define Pro ranges out to 150 yards and features Retina Lock to help reduce torque.





toward the target. Once the sight is set up, the red dot is removed so it is projecting a dot toward the target.

The Define Pro is made with a magnesium housing, which reduces the overall weight of the sight to a nice 13.8 ounces. The micro-adjust pins are .019-diameter fiber optics and the sight has second- and third-axis adjustments. There is also a sight light with five brightness levels.

### In Conclusion

Overall, each of these sights are very impressive, but they all come with their standout features as well as potential drawbacks. The uncluttered view on the Garmin is simply amazing, but depending on weather and certain conditions, I could see the potential for issues at times. Conversely, it is nice not having glass to worry about with the Oracle, but the view is more cluttered than that of the Garmin. The IQ is nice in that it is very similar to what most archers are used to shooting, with the added bonus of a built-in rangefinder. The only negative I see here is that an aiming dot isn't automatically projected like it is on the others, and that may be more what people are after if they are in the market for a rangefinding sight. I am confident that between these three sights, your customers can find what they are looking for. Each of these products seem very well made and capable of doing their intended job. Knowing the differences between each offering will assist you in pointing potential customers toward the product that best fits their needs. **HR**



**PRO STAFF** - Hunt DIY entrepreneur Zach Bowhay is highly regarded in the Western hunting community. His expertise is equipping hunters with the perfect gear for hunting big game in the mountains of the West. A well-published outdoor writer, Bowhay disseminates his expertise and shares his experiences through a variety of mediums including articles, social media and video.





# PRAIRIE DOG SAFARI, TWO WAYS

Are your customers chasing varmints year-round or even just in the off-season? Here's what you can sell them.

BY HILARY DYER

**B**ig game gets all the glory in hunting these days, but plenty of your customers are pursuing small game in their free time or plinking at varmints all summer to keep themselves occupied

and maybe protect their land, crops or gardens. And one of the most abundant (depending on the area) and fun varmints to hunt? Prairie dogs.

Non-hunters (and many times, even hunters) often ask why anyone would hunt prairie dogs.



**“I know, spot and stalk for prairie dogs sounds a little nuts, but believe me, it’s off-the-charts fun.”**

Well, for one thing, prairie dogs are an enemy of ranchers, destroying property and crippling cattle that step in their never-ending holes. That’s reason alone to terminate them with impunity. But for hunters, there’s another very good reason: A prairie dog hunt is a target-rich environment like no other, and it offers a chance to hone your skills in a short amount of time. A two-day prairie dog hunt will give you so many opportunities to practice gun handling, shooting from field positions and even spotting and stalking that you’ll be a vastly improved hunter by the time you’re done.

Last August I spent two days chasing prairie dogs (and I do mean chasing) at the Spur Ranch in Wyoming. It was late in the season, so setting up on a bench over a prairie dog town wasn’t a productive option. Rather, we did spot-and-stalk hunting, some on foot and some with the aid of a truck on the ranch trails. But what made this hunt interesting was the dramatically different gear I used each day. If you’ve got customers who shoot prairie dogs or other small varmints, this is something to consider.

### Airgun Style

We spent the morning at the range, shooting everything from airguns up to the 6.5 Creedmoor at ranges from 20 yards to one mile. When it came time for the afternoon prairie dog hunt, I knew what I wanted to do first: Spot and stalk with an airgun.

I know, spot and stalk for prairie dogs sounds a little nuts, but believe me, it’s off-the-charts fun. I was relatively new to airguns, but fortunately, I was accompanied by Rick Eutsler, who’s among the country’s top airgun experts and an avid hunter, and Lawrence Taylor, who works for Gamo.

Given the range limitations on airguns, I asked Lawrence, why would anyone choose them for prairie dogs?

“There are a couple reasons for choosing an airgun over a firearm for prairie dogs or other varmints,” he told me. “One is upping the challenge. You need to cut the distance and shoot from closer ranges when using an airgun, but within effective ranges, air rifles are plenty accurate and powerful enough to do the job. It’s

↑ Prairie dog hunting offers plenty of opportunity to stretch a precision rifle out to distance.

→ Serious long-range shooting (here, shooting at steel one mile out) requires serious equipment.





↑ Customers seeking air rifles will have to decide between PCP (shown here) or break-action.

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← On a spot-and-stalk style prairie dog hunt with a heavy air rifle, a tripod or shooting sticks are a must. Stock a couple of different shooting stick options for your customers.

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**“Recoil is practically nothing in a gun this heavy with a caliber this light...”**

more like hunting than shooting, like choosing a bow over a rifle for deer hunting. Now, I know it’s a blast to sit back and pick off tiny targets at 200 yards, but this brings me to the next reason — cost. Burning ammo gets expensive quickly! With an airgun, your costs are reduced, because both the guns and especially the ammo are far more economical.”

With that in mind, and armed with a Winchester Air Rifle Model 70 in .35 caliber with a five-shot magazine, we spent the afternoon spotting prairie dogs and ground squirrels, getting as close as we could, setting up on sticks, and taking shots. The downside — or the fun side, depending on how techy you are — is that a PCP airgun like this one has to be refilled from a scuba tank or carbon fiber bottle every 10 to 12 shots (this was the rate of refill for the gun I was shooting — the number varies depending on the gun/caliber, the projectile and other factors). The upside is that this is quick and easy once you’ve got the right gear, and airguns are accurate and

delightfully quiet to shoot compared to firearms. In all, I picked off about 20 prairie dogs and ground squirrels that afternoon, the farthest shot being 80 yards.

### Precision Style

The second afternoon of the hunt was a different story. I’d been shooting the Mossberg MVP Precision Rifle in .224 Valkyrie all morning at the range out to 1,000 yards, and I wanted a chance to stretch it out on varmints.

It exceeded my expectations, as I shot prairie dogs all afternoon. Recoil is practically nothing in a gun this heavy with a caliber this light, so it was pleasant to shoot and certainly accurate. Shots ranged from spitting distance out to 400 yards or so, and the MVP Precision topped with a Swarovski scope performed flawlessly.

Why the .224 and not the more common 6.5 Creedmoor or .223? Well, it’s softer and cheaper to shoot than the 6.5 Creedmoor, and it’s got more range and a better ballistic coefficient than the .223 due to the longer ogive of the projectile. But one of the big selling points of the .224 Valkyrie is that it fits in a standard AR-15 magwell — so what’s the point in chambering a bolt-action gun like the MVP Precision in .224? It’s a nice balance of ballistics and recoil, with less noise.

↓ Quality optics are helpful for spotting tiny targets in the distance. Offer customers a variety of price points, but skip the super-low-end glass that will only leave them disappointed and less likely to return to your store.





← Disassembly and gun cleaning is intimidating to more customers than you might expect. Make it easy for them to know what they need by stocking cleaning kits.

On this hunt, I was shooting the Federal 90-grain boattail soft point. This projectile is designed to expand well while retaining almost all of its weight, making it appropriate even for deer-sized game. It certainly did the job on varmints.

### What You Should Stock

On the range, everyone in our group shot the 6.5 Creedmoor version of the MVP Precision out to a mile and enjoyed plinking at Mule Kick and Boomslang targets at various distances. An air-gun dueling tree and a Jack of Diamonds spinner provided close-up entertainment and competition.

That's a lesson in itself: Are you stocking a variety of targets for your customers to choose from? Everyone needs paper targets, sure. But reactionary targets are always a hit, and you should consider dedicating a little shelf space to couple of different varieties.

Precision rifles are all the rage these days, and you might want to stock a few options along





**“Precision rifles are all the rage these days, and you might want to stock a few options along with the high-end scopes that are required to make long-range shots.”**

with the high-end scopes that are required to make long-range shots. Common calibers are .308 and 6.5 Creedmoor, although the 6mm Creedmoor, .224 Valkyrie and a few others are gaining steam, especially among the mid-range crowd.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, airguns are gaining in popularity every year. They come in PCP, which requires more associated gear and gadgets but offers better range and more power, or break-action models, which are simpler to operate, require basically no extra gear and generally launch projectiles with a little less oomph. “Varmint hunting with airguns and various types of airguns comes down to the game and the distance,” Rick says. “For small game like rabbits and squirrels up close — say, inside 50 yards — break barrels are a great fit. For larger game like prairie dogs, raccoon, opossum, armadillo, all the way up to big game, PCPs would be a bet-

← For range time or hunting setups over a prairie dog town, shooting mats can make customers more comfortable and even more accurate.

→ Mossberg's MVP Precision, shown here in 6.5 Creedmoor.

## Mossberg MVP Precision

The MVP Precision is Mossberg's entry into the precision rifle market. The company built a proprietary chassis specifically for this gun and paired it with a LUTH-AR MBA-3 adjustable stock. The gun accepts standard AR magazines and features Mossberg's Lightning Bolt Action (LBA) trigger, user-adjustable from 3 or 7 pounds. The MVP Precision comes with a threaded medium Bull barrel in .224 Valkyrie, 6.5 Creedmoor and 7.62 NATO, and it weighs between 9 and 10 pounds depending on the caliber.

### OTHER FEATURES INCLUDE:

- M-LOK modular mounting system
- Over one inch of LOP and cheekrest height adjustment, without tools
- Scalloped bolt handle for more clearance
- 20 MOA top Picatinny rail
- Slim-profile forearm
- Free-floated barrel

The MVP Precision comes with one 10-round P-Mag, and MSRP is around \$1,400; [www.mossberg.com](http://www.mossberg.com).





## Winchester Model 70-35

This high-power big-bore air rifle is a .35 caliber with a six-shot magazine operated with a smooth slide-lever action that operates easily, without the strain or effort required of break-barrel air guns. The wood stock with grip and forearm checkering gives the gun a classic look. The Model 70-35 generates up to 132 ft./lbs. of energy with 81.02-grain pellets or various cast ammo options. This big-bore air rifle is suitable for hunting medium-sized game such as deer and hogs, as well as varmints and predators out to 100 yards. Plus, it's a lot of fun to shoot at the range.

- Capable of producing 1-inch or better center-to-center groups at 50 yards
- Capable of producing 3- to 4-inch or better center-to-center groups at 100 yards
- Features a shrouded barrel for basic noise reduction
- Pump force: 320cc air cylinder fillable to 230 Bar
- 11mm dovetail scope mount
- Adjustable two-stage trigger
- Ships with two six-shot magazines
- Produces 12 shots with 55 +/- fps extreme speed
- MSRP: \$799

[www.winchesterairrifles.com](http://www.winchesterairrifles.com)

**“You might be surprised how many customers are unsure about the steps involved in proper cleaning of their firearms.”**

ter fit. Their range can stretch out past 150 yards with the right gun, ammo and conditions.”

For airgun varmint hunters, stock a couple of different types of projectiles and consider refilling options. It might or might not be practical to carry carbon fiber bottles or tanks for refilling PCPs, but these guns can also be charged with a hand pump, and you might consider stocking a few of those. Accessories like shooting sticks and rangefinders will be important to any prairie dog hunter.

And of course, all those guns have to be cleaned. You might be surprised how many customers are unsure about the steps involved in proper cleaning of their firearms. Make it easy for them to know what to buy by stocking kits as

→ Federal's 90-grain soft point shot well out of the Mossberg rifle and made short work of prairie dogs and ground squirrels, even at distance.



well as single bottles of solvents, oils and cleaners. On this hunt, we cleaned our firearms with Birchwood Casey's 1-2-3 aerosol pack that contains the company's Bore Scrubber, Gun Scrubber and Barricade products for simple cleaning.

If your customers are chasing small- to medium-sized varmints like prairie dogs, you can bet that they're doing so with a wide range of firearms and gear. The smart retailer will consider capitalizing on this market by stocking a variety, especially since much of the gear can pull double-duty for other species and styles of hunting. **HR**

↓ The increasingly popular .224 Valkyrie is effective and accurate out to about 1,000 yards.



**PRO STAFF**

Hilary Dyer has 17 years of experience editing hunting and firearms magazines and is the current Editor in Chief of

*Hunting Retailer* and *Clay Target Nation*. She has pursued big game and waterfowl across the U.S. and around the world and is developing a passion for long-range precision rifle shooting.

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John Haflner

# MAXIMIZE YOUR ARROW SALES

Knowing the technicalities of every arrow shaft you carry and how those translate to consumer benefits will give you a leg up on the competition.

BY DARRON MCDUGAL

**W**hen a bowhunter arrows or even misses a game animal, that arrow's survival hinges on many variables. The arrow could pass through the animal and catapult into the unknown, never to be found again. It could break if it strikes a rock or similar hard object or snap as the animal runs away. Others become lodged in logs, trees or stumps, and still others can incur hairline cracks due to abrupt

bone impacts. Simply put, bowhunting is hard on arrows.

For that reason, bowhunting arrows can be considered staples. They don't last forever. They need to be replaced, and your customers will invariably face that reality. To that end, arrows, in general, aren't very difficult to sell.

What's challenging is convincing your customers that high-end arrows are worth the extra money. To the untrained eye, most arrows appear

↑ Customers will always wonder why they should shell out big money for high-end arrows rather than cheaping out. You can upsell them with a good answer!

**“High-end arrows are for bowhunters who want to push the accuracy envelope out to great distances, and low-tier arrows with poorer tolerances are for the 25-yard-and-in bowhunter.”**

more or less the same. In other words, your customers might ask, “Why are a dozen of these arrows \$100 more than a dozen of those?” And it’s a legitimate question for the average bowhunting customer to ask.

### Explain the Differences

When choosing between a low-end bow and a high-end bow, it’s easy to see and feel the differences in just a few seconds. But with arrows, the differences aren’t always visible or touchable. That’s because the differences are all in the manufacturing processes used to produce them.

Tolerances are the chief differences between cheap and expensive arrows. Many average bowhunting consumers don’t understand that lingo.

↓ Putting the right arrow in your customers’ hands is an important part of getting repeat business.

Most believe that carbon arrows are carbon arrows — they’re either straight or broken. You’ve heard the adage, “The customer is always right.” In this case, they’re wrong, but you can carefully set them straight by articulating the importance of tolerances during your sales pitch.

Let’s discuss straightness first. Some arrow manufacturers make a run of a particular arrow model, and then they check each individual shaft for straightness. The straightest ones — usually +/- .001 inch or .0025 inch — are labeled as premium arrows, and those that don’t make the cut — say, +/- .006 inch — fall into a lower-grade category and are sold for considerably less.

Grain weight tolerance is another important term. Most premium arrow shafts have a grain weight tolerance of +/- .5 grains, or thereabout, from one shaft to another. This means all shafts in a dozen weigh within half a grain of one another.

Now, let’s tie straightness and grain weight tolerance together into consumer benefits. Achieving optimal accuracy at longer ranges — think 35 yards and beyond — requires arrow consistency. The more uniform the arrows, the more consistently they will group. If your prospective customer wants to achieve great performance at 60 yards, he or she will need to pay the price for premium arrows, because arrows that are truly straight and matched for weight will produce the



## Three Must-Stock Bow Cases

### RUGID Waterproof, Floating, Soft-Sided Case

RUGID's compound bow case utilizes a military-grade 500D PVC waterproof exterior and offers a fully waterproof, submersible version with zippered closure as well as a standard waterproof version with a weatherproof zipper that stands up to snow and rain. Both weathertight versions float when fully loaded and offer ample space for modern parallel-limbed compound bows with stabilizers. The interior offers a full inch of high-density padding around the entire surface, which is completely removable for cleaning or replacement.

The RUGID case was designed specifically for bow hunters who spend extended periods in the field and require a durable, weathertight case for the trek in and out but don't want the cumbersome inflexibility of a hard case. The soft case design allows the case to flex and form around the bow and allows rests, stabilizers and sights to remain attached. RUGID cases feature ATV/UTV/horseback-securing straps, ample arrow storage pocket, elastic call/flashlight sleeves, and multiple gear pockets. The case measures 41x17x6 inches (externally) and weighs 7.625 pounds. RUGID compound bow cases retail for \$159.99-\$209.99; [www.rugidgear.com](http://www.rugidgear.com)



### Plano Field Locker Bow Case

Plano's Field Locker bow case has been tested and certified to meet the U.S. Military's Mil-STD-810G requirements for functionality and transportation. As such, the Field Locker Compound Bow Case passed rigorous testing for immersion, vibration and dust. These tests were passed due to the Field Locker Compound Bow Case features, including its reinforced construction, watertight seals, double-density foam and industrial drawn-down latches.

The Field isn't only rugged – it's secure, thanks to reinforced padlock gates and solid construction throughout. Arrow storage is provided inside the lid, while easy-glide, ball-bearing wheels make for easy wheeling to your vehicle or the airline counter. The case features pre-perforated pluck foam for customization, heavy-duty Dri-Loc gaskets, over-molded, heavy-duty handle to reduce carrying fatigue, accessory storage and wheels for ease of transport. The case measures 46.38x18x7.25 inches (externally) and MSRP is \$269.99; [www.planomolding.com](http://www.planomolding.com)



### Pelican AIR 1745

Designed for rugged and secure protection, the Pelican AIR 1745 offers smart organization for bows, arrows and gear in a lightweight package. It will accommodate a wide range of bows and accessories and offers smart organization within a compact design.

Designed with the trademark Pelican Air construction, it is up to 40 percent lighter than the competition, minimizing additional travel costs. The exterior features six heavy-duty, push-button latches, including two TSA-approved combo locks and four stainless steel padlock hasps, as well as wheels for easy transit. The interior components provide modular storage, allowing for a range of configurations for unique bows and accessory kits.

The case also features integrated internal tie-down points for securing the bow in place, external corner tie-down points, high-density foam lining, MOLLE channels on lid and base and deep lid design for accessory storage. MSRP is \$399; [www.pelican.com/us](http://www.pelican.com/us)

results they want to achieve.

Now, customers who are shooting 25 yards and in won't realize any substantial difference between inexpensive and expensive arrows. At fairly close ranges, even arrows with somewhat poor tolerances generally group just fine, although fixed-blade broadheads could potentially cause poor flight when paired to a wobbly arrow, even when shot from a well-tuned bow.

To summarize my points, high-end arrows are for bowhunters who want to push the accuracy envelope out to great distances, and low-tier arrows with poorer tolerances are for the 25-yard-and-in bowhunter. Cater your sales pitches according to that motto, and you'll do great in matching your customers with arrows that meet their needs.

## The Right Spine for Your Customer's Bow

Various factors play into matching arrow ne (also called stiffness) to a specific bow. Obviously, it's unsafe to shoot an arrow designed for a 40- to 50-pound bow through an 80-pound bow, and even if it doesn't break, the bow limbs will undergo excessive stress (almost like a dry-fire) and the arrow won't fly optimally. Choose too stiff a spine for the bow and tuning can become a nightmare.

Most, if not all, arrow manufacturers have arrow spine-selector charts on their websites. Not only is bow poundage important, but so is the arrow length and tip weight, as those factors can weaken or stiffen the spine. Believe it or not, shooting with fingers also has a bearing on choosing the correct spine. In short, follow the specific arrow manufacturer's spine-selection chart to pair the correct spine option to each bow.

## Final Tips

As I mentioned earlier, the biggest struggle you'll face is convincing customers that high-end arrows are worth the money. Even after explaining the differences in straightness and grain weight tolerance, they still might hinge on the fence. For these customers, I'd have a few cheap carbon arrows — like those available at box stores — on hand. Put them on an arrow-straightness checker, and let the customer watch the ends wobble. Then, put a high-end arrow on and give it a spin. Let them lean in and see that the ends do not wobble. For skeptical customers, seeing is believing.

There will always be those few customers who buy high-end arrows online because they're a

→ Archery pro shops can hand-fletch arrows with quality vanes, which is a major selling point considering that box stores sell only factory-fletched arrows. Additionally, customers love custom fletching jobs.



→ Stock pro-shop-exclusive arrows like Gold Tip's Black Label and your customers will understand that they can purchase arrows from you that they can't find in big-box stores.





Becca McDougal

**“I suggest hand-fletching most of your arrows. Do a quality job and use quality vanes.”**

few bucks cheaper. When they bring those arrows in to be cut to length and inserted, charge them a per-arrow fee. When my family used to run an archery shop, we charged \$1 per arrow. Carefully instruct that arrows purchased from your store include cutting and inserting at no additional charge. Most often, the customer will buy from you next time because it's simpler in the long run. One final thought. I suggest hand-fletching most of your arrows. Do a quality job and use

↑ When hand-fletching arrows, be sure to take your time and do a quality job. Customers won't come back if their vanes peel off when they start shooting their new arrows.

← One of the greatest challenges you'll face is articulating the differences between expensive arrows with tight tolerances and inexpensive arrows with poorer tolerances.



Courtesy of Easton



## Upsell to Lighted Nocks

The lighted-nock category has grown substantially in the last several years, and selling them can yield some hefty profits. Some are pricy, but they're rich with benefits to the consumer (assuming they are legal for hunting in your state). Let me explain.

First, you can track your arrow in flight and usually identify your hit before retrieving your arrow. Then, in most cases, a lighted nock simplifies the search for an arrow that has missed or passed through an animal. Not only do you find your arrow, but you can also identify your hit far more quickly. That's incredibly valuable. Sell those benefits hard when a customer is considering purchasing lighted nocks.

There are many brands to choose from. Here are the most popular ones I know of: Lumenok, Firenock, Glory Nock, Victory Archery, Nock Out, NuFletch, Nockturnal and Carbon Express. All make good-quality nocks, and each has its own on-and-off mechanisms. Some customers might prefer one over the other, so having a few brands can be a good thing.

In the lighted nock's infancy, dealers had to carry countless SKUs to offer lighted nocks for all arrow sizes. This is no longer a concern, because several of the manufacturers I've named offer nocks with multiple adapters for different arrow sizes. This is convenient for the consumer, and it cleans up your retail pegs so you can simplify your offerings.

Of course, many lighted-nock manufacturers also offer lighted crossbow ends/nocks. With the crossbow category being as expansive and popular as it currently is, it makes good sense to offer lighted crossbow ends/nocks. A bolt fired from a high-velocity crossbow can pass through a deer and travel a great distance beyond the deer. Finding it can become a job. In many cases, the bolt is never recovered. Of course, a lighted end/nock substantially increases odds for recovering the bolt, making it an easy-sell item for most crossbow customers.

← Left to right: Beman White Out, CX Maxima XRZ, Easton FMJ T64 and Victory VAP TKO Elite



**PRO STAFF - Darron McDougal** has been part of the hunting industry for 17 years, first as a salesman and bow technician at a family-owned archery pro shop, then as an outdoor and trade writer/editor. McDougal is a passionate DIY hunter and travels extensively each year to hunt turkeys, hogs and big game across the states.

quality vanes. That is a huge selling point. You can offer custom fletching, too — think specific degrees of helical, wraps, add-on or upgraded accessories and numerous other things that a box store doesn't have the tools or know-how to do.

## Sell More Arrows!

Arrows are far more consumable than, say, bow sights or arrow rests. That means you'll sell lots and lots, if you have them. It pays to offer a wide selection so that you can offer every customer something. No, every customer won't pay \$200 for a dozen arrows. Often, those budget customers aren't 40-yard shooters anyway, so offer good-quality but budget-priced arrows for them.

Likewise, some customers won't even consider \$100-per-dozen arrows. They want the best, so it pays to offer a nice selection of high-end arrows. Understand: There are many high-end arrows to choose from and you obviously can't stock all of them. Depending on your store size, I'd suggest bringing in a handful of flagship arrows from reputable brands.

If a customer requests something you don't have in stock — this will happen — offer to order it. Distributors like H&H Archery, Kinsey's, Lancaster Archery and Nelson's Arrows, among others, are invaluable when you need to special-order a dozen arrows and get them quickly.

Follow these tips and take your arrow sales to new heights. **HR**





# START PLANNING FOR BLACK FRIDAY NOW

BY TOM MCHALE

Black Friday will be here in just a couple of months. Now's the time to make plans and formulate a marketing strategy.

**Y**ou know who knew what they were talking about regarding Black Friday marketing strategies? Fictional male models Derek Zoolander and Hansel. Yes, the dimwitted bro duo from the movie *Zoolander*. When plotting a strategy to sneak into the villain's office to steal incriminating evidence, Derek comes up with the perfect plan:

"Wait a minute, I might just have an idea. They'll be looking for us at Maury's, right? But they won't be looking for... (dramatic deep-thought pause) *not us...*"

And there you have it. So, maybe Derek wasn't thinking about Black Friday per se, but he did hit

on the solution. Why? Everyone assumes that they have to play by the traditional Black Friday rules. Advertise a lot. Open the store at some obscene hour. Hope that people know about your deals and show up with wallets in hand. What if you refuse to play by the established rules? It can work, as evidenced by companies like Uber. By the time you read this, they may have minted a new class of Silicon Valley billionaires through their IPO.

Here's the biggest problem with Black Friday: Noise. You know that you have some great deals. You know that you've found some new items that your customers will love. You know that it's important to get the word out to your customers. The

↑ Jam-packed stores don't happen by accident, even on Black Friday. You'll need to advertise your specials and get people in the door.

problem is that everyone else knows these things, too. In a world where we're all bombarded with stimulus 24x7x365, Black Friday turns the digital exposure dial up to 11. Your customers will get more emails, see more Facebook posts, and endure more web pop-up ads from everyone and their second cousins twice removed than they do during the rest of the year combined.

So, how do you get a sliver of attention from your customers? How do you optimize your sales on Black Friday? As the Gage family heroes in the movie *National Treasure* said, "change the status quo." We'll look at a few ways to do that, but before launching into specific strategies to consider, we ought to ask the most important question: Should you bother with all the hassle or just skip Black Friday altogether?

Yes. This is the day of the year when people are primed to spend money. Half of the emotional hurdle of making a purchase decision has already been overcome. On any other day, we debate with ourselves whether it's OK to buy

that new Flo-Bee hair cutting machine. On Black Friday, it's like society has given us permission to spend, so we do. You can't make a bad buying decision on Black Friday because ... deals!

So, what does that permission to spend mean? If you combine Black Friday and Cyber Monday sales, we're talking about a total spend of \$90 billion give or take. That translates to an average total cash outlay for those days of just under \$500 per shopper. That's a lot of potential hunting gear sales if you can beat out the people selling TVs and electronics.

Besides, it's not just the hunter that might spend money on Black Friday. It's anyone who might purchase holiday gifts for a hunter in their life. That opens the market into

individuals who might otherwise never set foot in your store.

In 2016, 101.7 million shoppers fought traffic to ven-

**“If you combine Black Friday and Cyber Monday sales, we’re talking about a total spend of \$90 billion give or take.”**

← The big-box retailers will be holding traditional Black Friday sales. Should you do the same thing or consider a different strategy?





**“You can try a similar strategy, although one that might cost you sales. Close the store. Or at least don’t have any sales on Black Friday. Huh?”**

↓ You’re almost certain to have a ton of people shopping at your gun counter. Make sure you have enough staff on Black Friday to handle all those 4473s.

ture out and buy stuff. Think about that — one in three Americans went shopping just on that day. And that counts all age groups. Considering that the demographic under 16 doesn’t drive, we’re talking about way more than one in three adults with disposable income in the shopper pool.

The game is big, so you want to take part. But how do you play the game and stack the odds in your favor? Here are some ideas to consider.

### Anti-Black Friday

Actor and comedian Bill Murray takes a novel approach to promoting himself. He makes himself completely unreachable by phone, mail or email. As a result, he’s missed out on some huge roles in blockbusters like *Monsters, Inc.*, *Rain Man*, *Iron Man*, *Shrek* and *Forrest Gump*. On the other hand, his refusal to breathlessly answer the phone calls from directors and producers has made him universally cool as the anti-Hollywood guy. Not only has the strategy weirdly worked out for him, it’s kind of hilarious.

You can try a similar strategy, although one that might cost you sales. Close the store. Or at least don’t have any sales on Black Friday. Huh? How about during the month or so leading up to Black Friday you take potshots at all those stores getting ready to wake up in the wee dark hours to open their doors to the stampeding hordes? In advertisements, on your website and on social media, talk about how sensible hunters will take care of their gear needs before that holiday, because at zero dark thirty on that morning, they’ll be headed to the woods, not the outlet malls.

If you want to be edgy, try stuffing your pre-

Black Friday marketing communications with slogans like “We won’t be having any Black Friday sales. We’ll be out hunting while everyone else is fighting the crowds.” Of course, we’re not suggesting that you skip Black Friday altogether; we’re just talking about ways to get your message heard in advance so you can take advantage of holiday spending before everyone maxes out their credit cards on the big day. This strategy pairs well with the next one.

### Start Black Friday in October or at Least the Week Before

Breaking the rules by running promotions early isn’t as non-traditional as it may sound. In fact, Amazon is starting to make pre-Black Friday online shopping a national pastime.

If you’re willing to invest some time and money to get the word out, there’s no reason you can’t develop your own “Black Friday-like” program. Maybe for the seven days leading up to Friday you can choose focus products for each day. Give each day a catchy label like Stands Saturday, Scopes Sunday, Mossy Oak Monday, Trail Cameras Tuesday, Waders Wednesday, Tungsten Shot Thursday or Footwear Friday. By changing the rules of when you will offer specials, you might just avoid getting caught up in all the noise and distraction of Friday itself.

There’s another benefit to starting early with your own program. During Black Friday week, discounts are extreme. Depending on the day, retail store discounts range from 20 to 37 percent, with the highest being on Black Friday itself. If you’re the only one in town running special deals early,



you won't have the same price pressure and might be able to get away with discounting a bit less.

### Play in the Big Show

There's nothing wrong with taking part in Black Friday itself if that's your thing. After all, it is the day that the most people spend the most money. What you don't want to do is mark down a bunch of stuff and hope people show up to buy. You'll want to be very intentional about who you want to sell to, what products you will offer on specials, and how you're going to get the word out and attract people to the store.

The first step is to figure out who your ideal Black Friday customer is. In aggregate, the younger folks spend more per capita on Black Friday than the older. Gen X and Y upstarts will spend near \$600 on that weekend, while Baby Boomers tend to fall in the less than \$300 range. On the other hand, there are more aging hunters than spring chickens, so you must think through your customer base. Just keep these figures in mind when you choose which products to promote.

As for making the most of the day, consider relieving customers of the time pressure to be there early. Run specials on the hour or maybe morning and afternoon so people don't have to choose between getting to your store and buying a new TV first thing in the morning. If you choose to capture people after the morning rush, maybe advertise a "shopping boost" to your customers with free coffee and doughnuts. Better yet, pick up some Black Rifle Coffee by the pound. Give cups away and sell the bags.

Here's the bottom line for Black Friday success. While you'll need to worry about practical logistics like having enough staff on hand, the real win will come with creative strategies to make sure that customers hear what you're offering. Don't be bound by tradition or what everyone else does. Instead, start your planning with a clean slate, beginning with the fact that people are going to spend money around that time. Then think about how you want to attract those buyers. **HR**



**PRO STAFF** - Tom McHale is a perpetual student of all things gun and shooting related. Tom is a professional writer by trade and has published seven books on guns, shooting, reloading, concealed carry and holsters. In between book projects, Tom has

published somewhere in the neighborhood of 1,700 articles for about a dozen gun and shooting publications. If he's not writing, you can probably find him on the range.

## Black Friday Product Ideas

Here are some ideas for hot products that might help you generate some "I want that!" and gift idea interest.

### Leupold Tracker 2

You might as well jump on the electronics bandwagon for Black Friday weekend. The Leupold Tracker is an affordable infrared monocular that helps you see and follow game and blood trails. Since it's thermal technology, it works equally well day or night. Point one into the woods or brush and you'll be amazed at what you can see. The HD version costs a bit more but offers shocking resolution, especially considering the price point.

**MSRP: \$1,039.99 and \$1,599.99 (HD)**



### FieldTorq Dressing Knife

This invention might be the most innovative thing at this year's NRA Annual Meeting and Expo. The FieldTorq is a multi-purpose tool that takes care of all your field-dressing chores. It's a knife, gut hook and bone cutter all in one. As both blades point inward, one of its biggest benefits is easy field dressing without risk of bursting organs and spoiling good meat. The tool also provides 4:1 mechanical leverage, making bone cuts effortless. **MSRP: \$59.99**



### Z-Clear Anti-Fog

Is it a wax? A paste? A cleaner? Z-Clear is all of the above, and it does a great job of not only cleaning your glasses, binoculars and scope lenses, but also giving them some serious anti-fog capability. It's available in paste and spray form. Just rub Z-Fog on the lens with a clean finger until it dries like a car wax, then wipe it off with a lens-friendly microfiber cleaning cloth. You can use the cleaning compound every few days and just wipe lenses off in between official cleanings. It's safe to use on treated glass or poly lenses, too. **MSRP: \$12.99**



### Blue Force Gear Micro Trauma Kit NOW!

When in the field far from help, injuries can become big issues. The Blue Force Gear Micro Trauma Kit NOW! packs a handful of emergency essentials into a 6-inch package that's roughly the size of a classic Israeli bandage. The whole pack loops onto your belt and tears open in an instant. You can choose two kits, which vary by contents.

The Basic Kit has clotting bandages, a trauma dressing, tape, a tourniquet and rubber gloves. The Advanced Kit adds more, including an airway tool and chest seals. There are a lot of ways to get hurt in the field; this kit adds some peace of mind.

**MSRP: \$129.95 to \$199.95**



### AimCam PRO 2

AimCam mounts a tiny camera on these specialized shooting glasses. The electronics, battery, SD card slot and controls are tucked away in the side frames, so the camera mounted above the bridge of the nose is only about the size of a single playing die. The Aimcam records in full HD whatever you're looking at so you can preserve your experiences for later playback. Watching what you did in slow motion is satisfying and can help you correct mistakes. It's WiFi-enabled, so you can preview what the camera sees to help with proper alignment. **MSRP: \$199**





# HUNTING RETAILER

## GEAR ROUNDUP:

### BOWS, ARROWS, BROADHEADS & BLADES

BY MIKE SCHOBLASKA

**1 GOLD TIP |**

**Airstrike Arrow**  
The new Airstrike ultralightweight arrows from Gold Tip feature a .204 diameter profile with an extreme front of center design for more stable flight and long-range accuracy. The Smart Carbon Technology uses pure carbon without fillers to produce arrows with a +/- .001-inch straightness tolerance and +/- 0.5 grain weight tolerance. A Dyna-Slick coating provides deeper arrow penetration and easier removal from targets.

**2 CARBON EXPRESS |**

**Maxima XRZ Arrow**  
The new-for-2019 Maxima XRZ series arrows from Carbon Xpress are constructed with Carbon Express's exclusive BackBone technology to offer 360-degree spine consistency. The center section, the Red Zone, utilizes Tri-Spine technology to engineer the arrow to be stiffer, reducing the exaggerated effect of heavy broadhead-tipped arrows. The Maxima XRZ arrows are sorted and matched by weight with +/- 1 grain tolerance, feature launchpad precision nocks, and are available in 150, 250 and 350 spines.

**3 EASTON |**

**Micro FMJ Arrow**  
The Full Metal Jacket (FMJ) arrows from Easton combine an aluminum jacket over a micro diameter carbon shaft that result in reduced surface area and increased penetration. The slick metal shaft surface of the micro-diameter arrows penetrates with less friction for more pass-through impacts. The reduced friction and drag of the FMJ arrows also creates higher speeds downrange and allows for easier extraction from targets. The Easton FMJ arrows are available in the new T-64 and in 4mm, 5mm and 6mm micro-diameter sizes.

**4 BLOODSPORT |**

**Bloodhunter Arrow**  
Bloodsport's new 2019 Bloodhunter arrows are standard diameter, midweight arrows with +/- .004-inch straightness and Blazer vanes that offer accuracy and penetration needed for big game; quickly and easily identify the shot placement by checking the Blood Ring. Available in popular spine sizes from 300 to 500, the Bloodhunter also features Bloodsport's new nock, making it stronger and more durable in the field.

**5 VICTORY |**

**Xtortion Arrow**  
The Xtortion arrows from Victory Archery feature layers of 304 stainless steel encapsulated within high modulus carbon fiber with an ice nano-ceramic arrow coating to improve penetration and allow for easy removal from targets. The .204 inside-diameter arrows are available in two models, the Gamer with +/- .003-inch and the Sport with +/- .006-inch straightness tolerances. Every Xtortion arrow is digitally spine aligned for increased accuracy and consistency.



**6 HOYT | RX-3**

The Hoyt Carbon RX-3 series is the next level in the REDWRX line of bows, available in three models: RX-3, RX-3 Ultra and RX-3 Turbo. With the new parallel track hollow carbon tube design, the RX-3 series creates a wider stance while maintaining riser rigidity and stability and redirecting shot vibration away from the grip. The grip system adjusts left and right for precise tuning and center shot alignment, completely customizable to different hand shapes and grip styles of individual shooters. The RX-3 is 30.5 inches axle-to-axle, weighs 3.9 pounds and shoots 342 fps. The RX-3 Ultra is 34 inches axle-to-axle, weighs 4.1 pounds and shoots 334 fps. The RX-3 Turbo is 31 inches axle to axle, 4 pounds and shoots 350 fps. Available in draw weights of 30-40, 40-50, 50-60, 55-65, 60-70 and 70-80 (RX-3 and RX-3 Ultra only) pounds. Draw lengths for the RX-3 are 25-28 inches or 27-30 inches, for the RX-3 Ultra are 27-30 inches or 29-32 inches, and the RX-3 Turbo are 26-28 inches or 28-30 inches.

**7 MATHEWS | Vertex**

The Mathews Vertex utilizes 3-D Dampening to reduce post-shot noise and felt recoil, with brand new SwitchWeight Technology that allows the shooter to change draw length and peak draw weight with a quick change of a cam mod. Measuring a compact 30 inches axle-to-axle with a 6-inch brace height, the Vertex produces speeds up to 343 fps with 80 or 85 percent let-off. The new Engage Grip ensures consistent hand placement, reducing torque and increasing accuracy. The Vertex is available with draw weights of 60, 65, 70 and 75 pounds with draw lengths ranging from 26 to 30.5 inches.

**8 MISSION | MXR**

The new MXR from Mission is built around the Crosscentric Cam technology, making it powerful and efficient but still forgiving with a 7-inch brace height. With IBO speeds up to 324 fps, the MXR features a redesigned, thinner grip that's more ergonomic for consistent hand placement, equaling reduced torque and enhanced comfort. Choose between Realtree original or black finishes with draw weights from 40 to 70 pounds and draw lengths from 23.5 inches to 29.5 inches. The draw length can be easily changed with the mod system that doesn't require a bow press. Mission created the MXR with a 30-inch axle-to-axle measurement and 80 percent let-off.

**9 PSE | Evoke 31**

With the Evolve Cam System (ECS) from PSE, the new Evoke 31 maximizes shootability without sacrificing speed or accuracy. The ECS creates a smooth transition from peak draw weight into the deep valley then to the relaxed pocket with a solid back wall with up to 90 percent let-off. Delivering speeds up to 342 fps, the Evoke 31 is 31 inches axle to axle with a 6-inch brace height and weighs 4.2 pounds. Available in charcoal, tan and four different Kolorfusion finishes, the Evoke 31 has draw lengths from 24.5 inches up to 30 inches and peak draw weights of 50, 60, 65, 70 and 80 pounds with a maximum of 10 limb bolt turns.



**10 ELITE** | Valor

The Elite Valor features a forged and machined aluminum riser with an upper riser cage for additional rigidity in the riser. The Valor is Elite's answer to archers looking for a sub-\$1,000 bow. The Valor measures 28.75 inches axle to axle with a forgiving 6<sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub>-inch brace height and adjustable draw length from 25 to 29.5 inches. With an estimated IBO speed of 329 fps, the Valor is available in peak weights of 50, 60 and 70 pounds, with adjustable let-off from 75 to 90 percent. The Valor comes in Elite's Ninja Black or Realtree Edge camouflage.

**11 BEAR** | Divergent

Built with whitetail hunters in mind, the Bear Divergent is only 28 inches axle to axle but still offers speeds up to 338 fps. With a Shockwaves limb dampener to reduce vibration and shock and SonicStops to eliminate string vibration and noise, the Divergent's hybrid cam system offers a smooth draw cycle without sparing speed and accuracy. The Bearcage design of the riser reduces flex and weight while maintaining its structural integrity. The Divergent weighs 3.9 pounds with a brace height of 6.5 inches, available with draw weights of 45 to 60 and 55 to 70 pounds and draw lengths ranging from 25.5 inches to 30 inches.

**12 BOWTECH** | Realm SR6

The Bowtech Realm SR6 delivers on speed and smoothness of draw. Firing up to 352 fps, the 32-inch axle to axle Realm SR6 is driven by a strategically weighted overdrive binary cam system that provides quick and simple left and right string adjustments which optimize accuracy by positioning the string directly behind the arrow. This cam system also helps to increase speed without creating a harsh draw cycle. Weighing only 4.3 pounds, the Realm SR6 is available with draw lengths from 25.5 to 30 inches and draw weights of 50, 60 and 70 pounds.

**13 PRIME** | Logic CT5

With a 35-inch axle to axle measurement, the CT5 from Prime Archery by G5 Outdoors has a maximum speed of 340 fps, a brace height of 6 inches and a riser made from 82X aluminum. With the versatile TRM parallel cam system with limb or cable stop options, the CT5 also features Prime's center grip design for optimal balance and an improved grip. An integrated quiver mounting system has been built into the riser of the CT5 for even easier mounting of the Sherpa quiver system. The CT5 is available with draw lengths from 24.5 inches to 30 inches in half-inch increments, and with peak draw weights of 40, 50, 60, 65, 70 and 80 pounds.





**14 XPEDITION | Mako X**

The Mako X from Xpedition Archery shoots up to 364 fps with a brace height of only 5 inches and an axle to axle length of 33.3 inches. With modular 0.5-inch-increment draw length adjustment from 24.5 inches to 30 inches without the need for a bow press, the Mako X eradicates the hump of the draw cycle and hand shock common in short brace height bows. This produces a smooth draw cycle while still producing staggering speed. The Mako X weighs 3.9 pounds and is available in peak draw weights of 40, 50, 60, 65 and 70 pounds with 80 percent let-off.

**15 OBSESSION | FX7**

The Obsession FX7, with its 7-inch brace height and new OB Trax Cam system, delivers speeds of up to 350 fps with an axle-to-axle measurement of 32.75 inches. Choose from peak draw weights of 40, 50, 60, 65, 70 or 80 pounds and draw lengths from 26 inches to 31.5 inches. The new FX Limb Pocket is a three-piece lightweight design that creates precise alignment from the riser to the limbs, reducing cam lean and limb torque. The Obsession FX7 also features the TorqueLess Angled Cable Rod that increases speed, provides for a smoother draw cycle and reduces cam lean and torque. Weighing in at 4.5 pounds, the FX7 has 90 percent let-off.

**16 QUEST |**

Centec and Centec NXT

The Centec and Centec NXT bows from Quest Bowhunting, by G5 Outdoors, were designed with center grip technology and come standard with removeable and exclusive "grip assist" to promote proper grip and consistent form. The Centec measures 32 inches axle to axle with adjustable draw length of 24.5 to 30 inches and 40 to 55 or 55 to 70-pound limbs. The Centec NXT is 26 inches axle to axle with an adjustable draw length from 19 to 26 inches and 15 to 45-pound limbs. Both bows are available bare or with a Designed to Hunt package that includes a four-pin sight, rest and quiver.

**17 DARTON | Spectra-e**

The Spectra-e from Darton features the Dual Sync Equalizer cam system that minimizes cam lean, coupled with the Equalizer Cable system to allow for a bow that is adjustable and versatile. With the adjustable draw module, positive limb stops, adjustable let-off and an assortment of draw stop tabs, the Spectra-e gives the shooter complete control of the feel of the draw. The Spectra-e measures 32.75 inches axle to axle with a 6-inch brace height and produces speeds up to 335 fps. With draw lengths from 25 inches to 31 inches and draw weights of 40, 50, 60 and 70 pounds, the Spectra-e weighs 4.2 pounds and is available in Shadow Black, OD Green, Kryptek Highlander and Kryptek Typhon.





**18 MUZZY ONE | Broadhead**  
The Muzzy ONE is a one-piece broadhead milled from a single block of premium stainless steel with a hybrid chisel/cut-on-contact tip and vented blades for consistent penetration and flight. The ONE is a 100-grain broadhead with .046-inch-thick blades and a 1.125-inch cutting diameter. Easy to care for, the Muzzy ONE can be sharpened on a flat stone and is available in packs of three as well as in a crossbow model.



**19 NAP | Dark Knight Aluminum 125 Broadhead**  
The NAP Dark Knight Aluminum 125 hybrid broadhead combines the guaranteed cutting width of a fixed-blade head with the accuracy of a mechanical, with 1.125-inch-cutting-diameter bleeder blades and 1.375-inch-cutting-diameter main blades. Once deployed, the main blades lock together and pivot in the one-piece aluminum ferrule, allowing the Dark Knight to continue penetrating around obstructions rather than deflecting. The Spitfire blade retention system ensures open-on-impact performance without the need for rubber bands or O-rings. The Dark Knight Aluminum 125 broadhead is compatible with crossbows as well as vertical bows.



**20 RAGE | Hypodermic NC Broadhead**  
The Hypodermic NC (No Collar) from Rage utilizes finger-like tabs on the blades' Slip Cam to pin them in place when in the closed position, eliminating the need for a shock collar or O-ring. The new 100-grain Hypodermic NC features the hypodermic hybrid tip and needle-like ferrule for field-tip accuracy, opening up to a 2-inch cutting diameter with two .035-inch-thick blades for a slap-cut entry hole for better blood trails.



**21 TRUGLO | Titanium X Fixed Broadhead**  
TruGlo Titanium X fixed broadheads are available in either a 3-blade or 4-blade 100-grain configuration, both with a 1 $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch cutting diameter. The Titanium X broadheads feature a one-piece Tru-Cut titanium tip and Grade 5 CNC machined titanium ferrule. Titanium X fixed broadheads are spin tested and sharpness tested to ensure ultimate performance. Each pack of three broadheads includes a broadhead installation wrench and one set of replacement blades.



**22 WAC'EM | Steel SlipCam Hybrid 4-Blade Broadhead**  
The Steel SlipCam Hybrid 4-Blade 100 grain broadhead from Wac'Em features a 1 $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch fixed blade cutting diameter and a 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch expandable blade cutting diameter. The precision-machined steel ferrule is tipped with a pressed-in stainless steel Penetrator tip. The expandable blades of the Steel SlipCam Hybrid 4-Blade broadhead are kept in place during flight with an O-ring. Each package of three broadheads includes one free Nockturnal FIT Nock with three bushings.



**23 SWHACKER | Levi Morgan #261 Broadhead**  
The unique arched blade design of the Sw Hacker Levi Morgan #261 broadhead reduces blade resistance after entry, retaining greater arrow momentum and delivering increased pass-through performance. Measuring 1 inch wide in flight and opening to 2 inches with blades deployed, the #261 features a reinforced ribbed ferrule that delivers greater strength and rigidity. Blade lock technology allows the expandable blades to be locked in the closed position so hunters can practice with the exact broadhead they'll use for hunting, without dulling the stainless steel .032-inch-thick blades.



**24 BLOODSPORT | Deadline Broadhead**  
Bloodsport Deadline broadheads were designed to withstand the torque and energy of elite crossbows and are capable of handling speeds up to 500 fps. The Deadline features a 100-grain, chisel-tip ferrule made from 7075 aluminum. Two large, mechanical 420 stainless-steel blades offer a 2-inch cutting diameter and are held together without the aid of O-rings or rubber bands. The Deadline broadhead employs deployed-opening, expandable blades that enter before deployment and slice through organs and tissue with minimum drag on the arrow.



**25 G5 | Striker V2 Broadhead**  
The Striker V2 from G5 is a fixed, replaceable-blade broadhead with a cut-on-contact stainless-steel design. Featuring the scary-sharp Lutz blades with a new, stronger retention system, the Striker V2 has a 1.25-inch cutting diameter and a fully machined stainless-steel ferrule. Available in 100- and 125-grain standard threads and 100-grain Deep Six threads, the Striker V2 broadheads are complemented by G5's ballistic match practice points.



**26 WASP | Havalon HV Broadhead**

The new Havalon HV fixed-blade broadhead is the result of a partnership between Wasp Archery and Havalon Knives to deliver surgical sharpness in a replaceable blade broadhead. The .035-inch thick stainless-steel blades combine for a 1.1875-inch cutting diameter. The Wasp Havalon HV broadheads feature the Stainless Smart Tip (SST) designed for deep penetration and a 7075 T6 aluminum ferrule. Each pack of 100-grain broadheads includes three complete broadheads and six replacement blades.



**27 QAD | Exodus Crossbow Broadhead**

A super compact head that's as short as a field point allows the Exodus crossbow fixed-blade broadhead from QAD to fly just like a field point. Available in 100- or 125-grain models, the Exodus features .040-inch-thick stainless steel replaceable blades with either Full or Swept designs that offer a steep cutting angle and precision spin during flight. The Exodus crossbow broadheads offer a 1.25-inch cutting diameter and are designed and manufactured in the USA.



**28 RAMCAT | Cage Ripper Broadhead**

With a 2-inch cutting diameter, the mechanical Cage Ripper broadheads from Ramcat feature the Transformer Deployment System that employs a spring-loaded mechanism to deploy the blades on impact with a post-lock plunger system that guarantees the blades remain deployed after impact. The Cage Rippers are available as a three-pack of 100-grain broadheads that utilize two .032-inch-thick stainless-steel blades and a patented concave scoop for added accuracy and penetration.



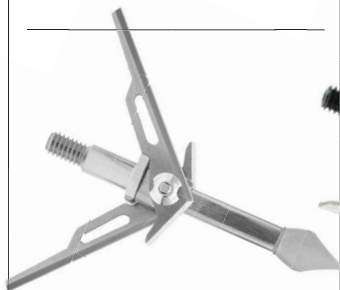
**29 TROPHY TAKER | Shuttle T-Lok Broadhead**

Shuttle T-Lok fixed replaceable blade broadheads from Trophy Taker utilize a non-vented shuttle blade design that produces oversized entry and exit holes while remaining silent during flight. The 100-grain model has a 1½-inch cutting diameter and the 125-grain model has a 1¾-inch cutting diameter. The patented T-shaped connection between the blades prevents separation of the blades from the ferrule even when fired into solid bone, concrete or metal.



**30 ROCKET | Meat Seeker Broadhead**

Rocket Meat Seeker three-blade mechanical broadheads produce a 2-inch cutting diameter and have a 3.09-inch cutting surface area. The Meat Seeker deploys on contact with Piston Action and features newly designed, extremely sharp blades. The 100-grain Meat Seeker broadheads utilize an O-ring for blade retention during flight. The rotating chisel tip finds the path of least resistance, allowing the head to navigate around bone and hard tissue.



**31 SIK | SK2 Broadhead**

SIK SK2 two-blade mechanical broadheads feature patented FliteLoc Technology to guarantee the broadhead will deploy on impact. The SK2 broadheads feature a signature offset blade design that produces a 2-inch offset entry wound and a total cutting surface of 3.625 inches. These 100-grain rear-deploy broadheads fly like field points and accept replaceable FliteLoc Clips for multiple uses.



**32 ROCKY MOUNTAIN | Switchblade Broadhead**

The Rocky Mountain Switchblade mechanical broadheads feature two expandable .035-inch-thick stainless-steel blades with a 2-inch cutting diameter and a cut-on-contact ⅜-inch tip for almost 3 full inches of cutting diameter. The Switchblade's jackknife blade deployment system will not open until the blades have made full contact with the animal. The blades are retained inside the aerodynamic aluminum ferrule with a replaceable O-ring.



**33 INNERLOC | Carnage Broadhead**

The Carnage broadhead expands the Aero Series from Innerloc Broadheads. The Carnage has rear-deploying razor-sharp blades that slice through Innerloc's exclusive aerodynamic wraps to create massive wound channels. These 100-grain mechanical broadheads offer a 1.5-inch cutting diameter and .040-inch-thick blades. The Carnage comes with wraps in multiple designs, or you can create your own. The Carnage will fly straight out of even the fastest bows.





# HUNTING RETAILER NEW PRODUCTS



## WILDLIFE RESEARCH CENTER SUPER CHARGED SCRAPE-DRIPPER

The Super Charged Scrape-Dripper Combo from Wildlife Research Center can operate for up to seven to 12 days with the included 4-ounce bottle of Golden Scrape. It has an air pocket that expands and contracts with temperature change, pushing the scent out during daylight hours as temperatures rise and stopping when temperatures are steady or falling. Golden Scrape is a blend of Golden Estrus and intruding buck scents with tones of fresh scraped earth and Territorial Musk. MSRP: \$27.69. [www.wildlife.com](http://www.wildlife.com)

## MEOPTA OPTIKA HD BINOCULARS

The Optika HD binoculars from Meopta are available in 8x42 or 10x42 models and feature advanced HD lenses with phase-correction and dielectric coatings. The lightweight magnesium-alloy binoculars are encased in a newly designed shock-proof rubber-armed exterior and deliver incredible brightness, color fidelity, edge-to-edge sharpness and increased contrast. These binoculars feature Meopta's MeoShield anti-abrasion lens coatings and MeoDrop hydrophobic lens coatings, which repel rain, dust and grease. The twist-up eyecups are metal with a soft rubber exterior and are easily removable for cleaning. MSRP: \$289.95 to \$299.95.

[www.meoptasportsoptics.com](http://www.meoptasportsoptics.com)



## RUGID COOLER BUCKET

The Cooler Bucket from Rugid has a compact round design that's available in either 2.5-gallon or 5-gallon sizes. The Cooler Bucket features an aluminum flip-down handle, more than 2 inches of insulation and a neoprene top pad that makes the Cooler Bucket a comfortable and durable seat. Like all Rugid coolers, the Cooler Bucket features 100-percent replaceable parts, a built-in bottle opener and a cam latch. A spigot-style drain valve and built-in breather hole allow the bucket to double as a water cooler. The Cooler Bucket is available in five colors: Snow, Slate, Sky Surf, Sand and Pink. MSRP: \$149.99 to \$169.99. [www.rugidgear.com](http://www.rugidgear.com)

## DEAD DOWN WIND DEAD ZONE SYSTEM

The Dead Zone System from Dead Down Wind is a complete odor-elimination system with a two-step cleaning process that involves UV Blue pretreatment and ozone. The four-stage ozone generator produces 50, 100, 250 and 500 mg/hour of ozone and circulates it 360 degrees within the weatherproof gear bag. The ozone generator features a rechargeable, quick-detach battery that lasts for four to eight hours of continual use. The Dead Zone System includes a 110V/12V DC charging adapter to charge the ozone generator in a standard wall outlet or a vehicle. The gear bag features heavy-duty carrying straps and shoulder strap and easy-pull zipper loops. MSRP: \$299. [www.deaddownwind.com](http://www.deaddownwind.com)



## ONTARIO KNIFE COMPANY OLD HICKORY HUNTING KNIFE

Ontario Knife Company has added a rugged hunting knife design to its popular Old Hickory line with the Old Hickory Hunting Knife. The Hunting Knife has a 5.5-inch blade constructed of high-carbon steel that is more than capable of maintaining an edge and has a hardness rating of 55-57 HRC. The Hunting Knife has a hardwood handle that is secured with brass compression rivets. MSRP: \$19.95. [www.ontarioknife.com](http://www.ontarioknife.com)



## BREAKTHROUGH CLEAN ALL-IN-ONE CLP

All-In-One CLP from Breakthrough Clean cleans, lubricates and protects firearms and accessories, crafted using the finest base oils, additives and solvents. All-In-One CLP removes carbon fouling, oil, grime and other contaminants. It also penetrates deep to prevent metal-to-metal contact, friction and wear. All-In-One CLP coats evenly to repel moisture and shield metals from rust and corrosion. All-In-One CLP is available in 2-ounce, 6-ounce and 16-ounce pump spray bottles as well as 32-ounce, 1-gallon and 5-gallon cans. MSRP: \$8.95 - \$435.95. [breakthroughclean.com](http://breakthroughclean.com)



**SCENTLOK OZ RADIAL NANO**

The OZ Radial Nano by ScentLok is a compact, all-in-one, portable, rechargeable ozone generator that's ideal for smaller spaces. The Radial Nano emits ozone in 360 degrees, offers four operating modes and will charge mobile devices via its built-in USB port. The Radial Nano can run up to eight hours per charge, has a simple two-button design and four-LED display and can be hung by the provided tether strap. MSRP: \$179.00. [www.ozbyscentlok.com](http://www.ozbyscentlok.com)



**RINEHART TARGETS**

**1/3 SCALE WOODLAND ELK TARGET**

Rinehart Targets has expanded its Woodland Series of lifelike 3-D archery targets with the addition of the 1/3 Scale Woodland Elk Target. It has lifelike sculpted features for a realistic look and measures 38 inches tall and 44 inches long. The 1/3 scale size simulates a 60-yard shot at 20 yards. The 1/3 Scale Woodland Elk features solid FX Woodland Foam with Rinehart's Signature Series foam replaceable core. The target is capable of stopping shots from compound bows as well as crossbows. MSRP: \$219.99. [www.rinehart3d.com](http://www.rinehart3d.com)



**FOXPRO XWAVE**

The XWAVE is the flagship model of the new X-Series of electronic calls from FoxPro. The XWAVE features two positional

Xtreme High Definition (XHD) horn speakers with an added tweeter for improved frequency response. The XWAVE is Bluetooth compatible, so the user can connect via their Bluetooth device and play animal sounds from their own library. Additional features include two external speaker jacks for even more volume, a charge jack and an auxiliary jack to connect a decoy. The XWAVE comes with 100 FoxPro sounds with the ability to store and access up to 1,000 sounds. The XWAVE can be operated manually or with the TX-1000 remote control and comes with a lithium battery and charger kit. MSRP: \$699.95. [www.gofoxpro.com](http://www.gofoxpro.com)

\*Actual product may differ from what is shown.



**WILDERNESS ATHLETE MASTERMIND SUPPLEMENTS COMBO**

The Mastermind series of nootropic supplements from Wilderness Athlete includes three formulas, Edge, At Ease and Unplug. Edge's brain-boosting formulation accelerates brain function, enhances memory and sharpens focus. At Ease is a mood booster designed to promote relaxation, stabilize mood and reduce stress. At Ease utilizes a nootropic blend that helps people stay positive and productive by reducing the negative impacts of stress and anxiety. Unplug creates the desired behavior of neurotransmitters in the brain and optimizes the natural sleep cycle without melatonin. Each bottle contains a 30-day supply of easily swallowed capsules. MSRP: \$99.95. [www.wildernessathlete.com](http://www.wildernessathlete.com)



**HHA SPORTS OPTIMIZER CADET BOW SIGHT**

The HHA Sports Optimizer Cadet bow sight has a simple single-pin setup developed for youth and beginning archers. The Cadet features tool-free windage and elevation adjustments, CNC-machined aluminum housing and fully protected fiber optics. The sight has a 1 5/8-inch diameter opening with a level on the bottom edge and a bright sight picture. The Cadet can also be used on bowfishing setups for enthusiasts who need to make fast shots on swimming fish under low light. MSRP: \$69.99. [www.hhasports.com](http://www.hhasports.com)



**BENJAMIN GEN2 FORTITUDE**

The Benjamin Gen2 Fortitude PCP air rifle from Velocity Outdoor features an adjustable hammer spring that allows the shooter to adjust the gun to maximize velocity or shot count. The Gen2 Fortitude is available in .177 or .22 calibers and has a 34 percent reduction in cocking effort with an improved balance in the hammer and valve spring setup and a 20-percent reduction in the trigger pull weight. The Gen2 Fortitude uses 10-shot rotary magazines for bolt-action firing and has a lightweight all-weather ergonomic stock. The built-in regulator on the 3,000 PSI reservoir controls the output air pressure for shot-to-shot consistency. MSRP: \$299.99. [www.crosman.com](http://www.crosman.com)





# The Top 10 Hunting Products of the Past 50 Years

BY BOB ROBB

In his 1949 classic, *A Sand County Almanac*, the writer, sportsman and conservationist Aldo Leopold lamented that the outdoorsman of his day was becoming a “gadgeteer,” more dependent upon “stuff” than woodsmanship. If he could see us now! Still, there’s no doubt that improvements in equipment have made days afield safer, more enjoyable and more productive than at any time in history. Here, in no particular order, is my list of the 10 most important product innovations of the past 50 years.

**1** Non-toxic shot bullets: A 1970s study estimated that between 1.6 and 2.4 million waterfowl died annually from swallowing lead shot, and the Fish & Wildlife Service banned its use for waterfowl hunting in 1991. Since then there have been bans on lead bullets in some states. Though high cost remains an issue, as the technology for producing lead-free ammo has improved and availability widened, its acceptance has grown. It’s been good for both the environment and our image.

**2** Gore-Tex: In 1969, Bob Gore created expanded polytetrafluoroethylene (ePTFE) and, somewhat by accident, invented the waterproof, windproof and breathable material known as Gore-Tex. When laminated to certain fabrics, this created a whole new class of outdoor clothing, footwear and accessories.

**3** Variable-power, waterproof rifle scopes: It’s hard to imagine that variable-power riflescopes were not developed until the late 1940s, waterproof scopes did not make an appearance until 1960, and fully multi-coated lenses were not commonly available until the early 1970s. Today, more than 90 percent of all scopes sold to

hunters are variable-power scopes.

**4** Treestands: Inspired by the platforms he saw Japanese snipers use in the treetops in the Pacific theater in WWII, Floridian Andy Anders developed the “Andy Stand” in 1947, the first commercially made platform designed specifically for deer hunting from trees. Later there was the Baker climber, often called the “death trap” for its propensity to slip down a tree trunk with the user still aboard. How times have changed for both treestand design and safety! And speaking of treestands, the development of quality safety harnesses — begun back in 2001 by brothers Jerry and John Wydner and their company, Hunter Safety Systems — has made hunting from above infinitely safer.

**5** Laser rangefinders: Rangefinder history is fascinating, the first rangefinder was developed back in 1880, with coincidence-type and radar rangefinders being used in WWII. In 1964 the first laser rangefinder prototype was invented, with the Soviets employing them on tanks as early as 1972. When the technology was made cost-effective for sporting use, it was a game-changer.

**6** Expandable broadheads: Archers had been experimenting with mechanical broadheads for a long time (think 1956 Mohawk, 1959 Geronimo, 1972 Pioneer Game Tamer and 1983 Viper) before Greg Johnson brought his game-changing Rocket Aerohead to market in the late 1980s. Acceptance was slow at first, but as both compound bow and arrow performance improved, soon it was apparent that mechanical broadheads were here to stay. Today, top-end mechanicals outsell all other broadhead designs in America.

**7** One-cam bow: Matt McPherson is one of the most talented and humble

men you’ll ever meet. His first company, McPherson Archery, paved the way for reducing compound bow let-off from 50 to 75 percent. When the company sold in 1989, Matt’s idea for a radical new one-cam design formed the basis for Mathews Inc., and his SOLOCAM revolutionized the archery industry. Today Mathews compounds, like those from other bow makers, primarily incorporate a dual cam system. But it was the one-cam that upped the bar in compound bow design and changed the game forever.

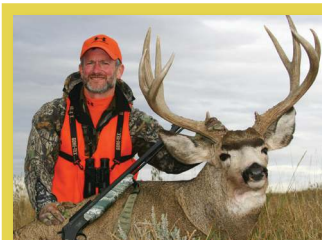
**8** Scouting cameras: First it was the Trail Timer, which recorded the time an animal tripped a string stretched across a trail. Next the Trailmaster sent an infrared beam of light to a receiver, which did the same thing. But hunters didn’t know exactly what “flipped their switch” until 1989, when Camtrakker developed the first device that incorporated a film camera. This all morphed into today’s digital scouting cameras, the most sophisticated of which can be viewed from your home computer or mobile device. Scouting will never be the same.

**9** GPS units and hunt apps: I’m not sure many millennials can use a map and compass. But why would they when they have access to relatively inexpensive GPS units that incorporate weather reports, mapping tools and more? Apps like Huntstand.com, Scoutlookweather.com, OnXmaps.com, Powderhook.com and others are growing in popularity by leaps and bounds.

**10** Inexpensive, accurate rifles: State-of-the-art manufacturing processes that allow the manufacture and sale of MOA or better rifles for under \$500 have changed shooting and hunting. When I started shooting seriously in the 1970s, sub-MOA accuracy was achieved only by handloading for expensive custom-grade rifles. Today that same accuracy is possible with inexpensive rifles from several different manufacturers shooting factory ammo.

Honorable mention: Electronic predator calls, night-vision optics, mechanical release aids, electronic hearing protection and multi-tools. And, of course, the internet.

What products should be on this list? Are these “oldies but goodies” still profit makers for your business? Drop me a note at [editor@grandviewoutdoors.com](mailto:editor@grandviewoutdoors.com) — I’d love to hear about it and share it with our readers. **HR**



**PRO STAFF** - Bob Robb has been a full-time outdoor writer since 1978. He’s a former staff editor for *Peterson’s Hunting* magazine, as well as the former editor of *Western Outdoor News*, *Peterson’s Bowhunting*, *Inside Archery*, *Whitetail Journal*, *Predator Xtreme* and *Waterfowl & Retriever* magazines. He’s hunted on five continents with both rifles and archery equipment and lived in Alaska for 15 years, where for a time he held an assistant hunting guide’s license.

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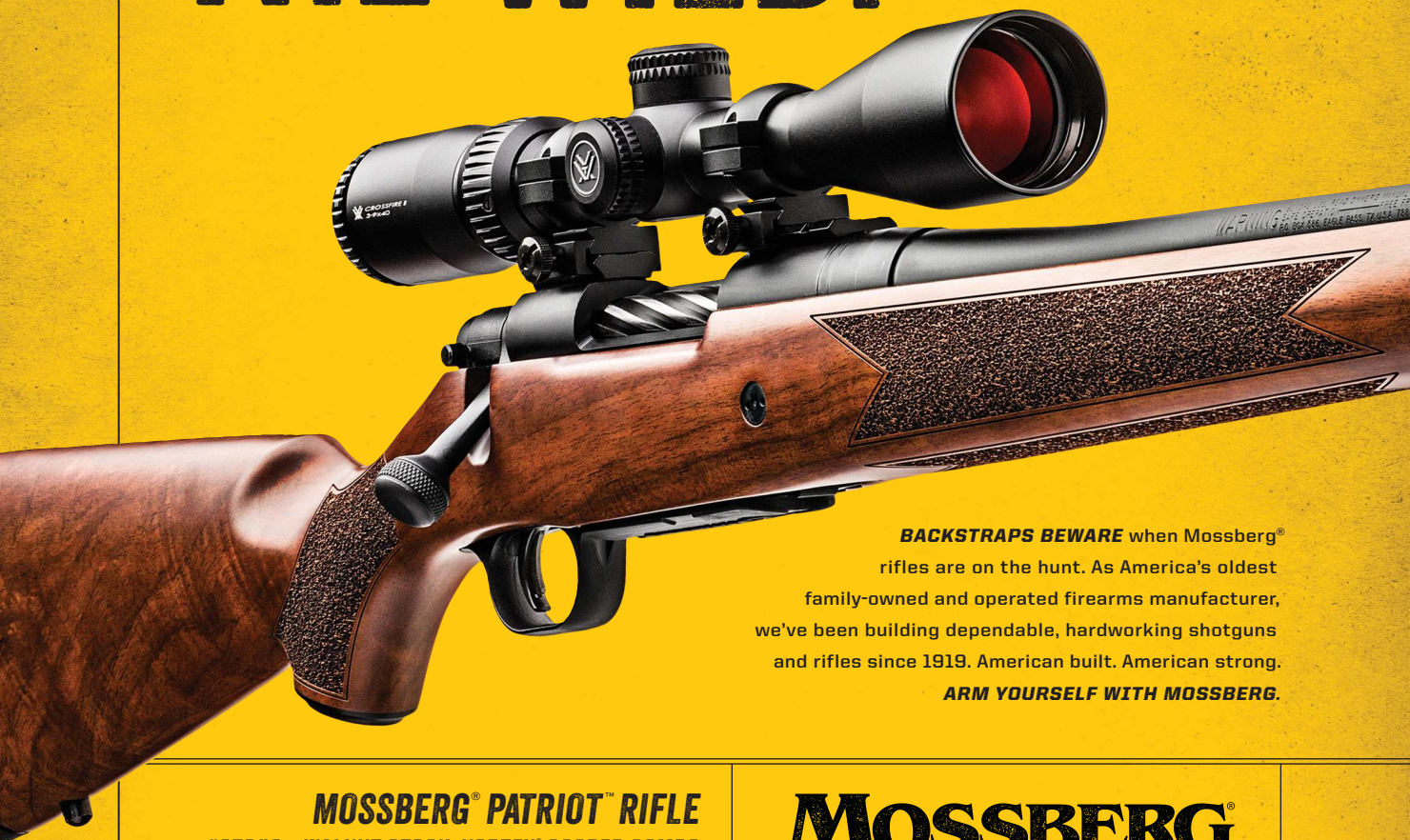
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