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November/December 2021 | Winter Special

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COLD WEATHER GEAR
Put to the Test

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BLINDS

SELLING SECURITY
Help Hunters Deter Theft at Camp



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REVIEWED
MOSSBERG 940 FIELD PRO

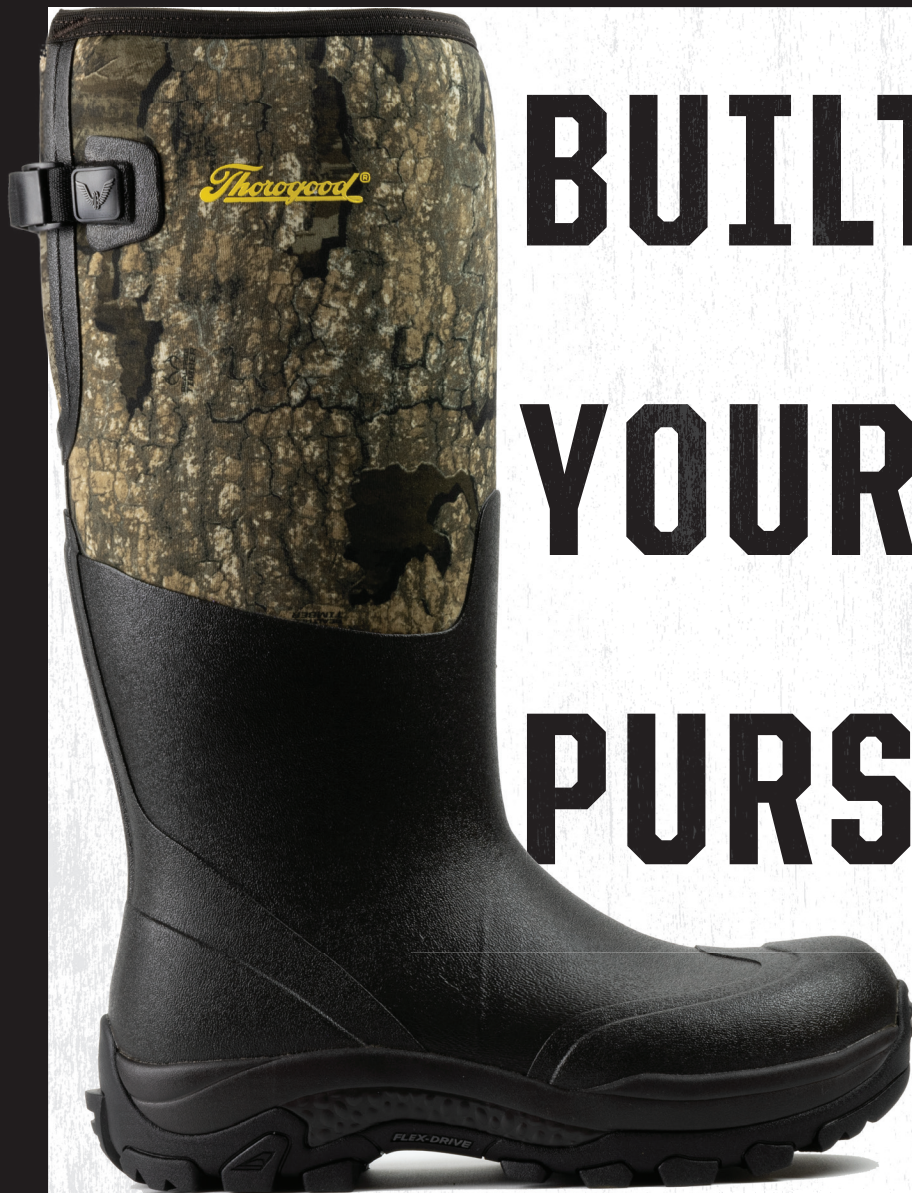
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Hodgdon closes GOEX Blackpowder Facility to Focus on Smokeless Powder

Hodgdon Powder Company has officially announced the closure of its Camp Linden, Louisiana, GOEX blackpowder manufacturing facility and with that, closes the door on the last domestic source of blackpowder in the U.S.

According to a press release from Hodgdon, business will wind down operations while evaluating the future of the blackpowder division with options that may include a potential sale of both GOEX and Olde Eynsford brands to a company which can continue production. All affected employees will stay with the company until December 31, 2021, to facilitate an orderly closing.

No impacts or changes are expected on Hodgdon's other categories or brands. Reports are that Hodgdon plans to focus efforts on their smokeless and muzzleloader blackpowder substitute offerings moving forward.

Vote Now!

Voting is still open in the Choice Awards for Hunting Retailer's sister publications, Shooting Sports Retailer and Tactical Retailer. These unique awards allow you, the dealers and end-users, to vote on your favorite brands in the industry. Let us know what brands you think deserve the recognition and we will honor the Gold, Silver and Bronze award winners. Help us increase visibility and show our appreciation for the best the industry has to offer! Visiting shootingsportsretailer.com and tactretailer.com to vote.



SAR USA Now Offering Premium Ammunition to US Market

SAR USA by Sarsilmaz is now offering its NATO-inspired 9mm pistol ammunition to the U.S. market. Sarsilmaz merges the latest in cartridge innovation, design and technology along with their Old-World heritage and craftsmanship to deliver sport shooting, hunting, competition, defense and training ammunition.

"This is an incredible opportunity to bring high-quality ammunition to new SAR firearm owners and a market desperate for it," said Todd Pearson,

COO for SAR USA. "SAR ammunition is designed, engineered and manufactured to perform to the highest standards."

SAR 9mm NATO full metal jacket ammunition is made in Turkey. It features brass casings and military-grade sealed primers.

SAR 9mm ammunition is available in 50-round boxes in either 115-grain FMJ or 124-grain FMJ. For more information, visit www.sarusa.com.

Umarex USA Appoints VP of Marketing

Umarex USA, innovator, manufacturer, and marketer of airguns, optics, and accessories for the outdoor enthusiast, announced an addition to their executive leadership team. Justin Biddle accepted a new role in the Umarex USA family as Vice President of Marketing. "JB," as he is commonly known among his work family and friends in the industry, has been with Umarex USA nearly from the beginning of their operations in Fort Smith, Arkansas.

As director of marketing, Biddle was responsible for all visual marketing strategies for North America including brand development, product launches, media buying, advertising, and trade shows associated with all product categories. He was also responsible for Umarex USA's online presence for its brands and has been responsible for the organizational development of Umarex USA's marketing team. JB also served as Executive

Producer of the American Airgunner TV show for six years.

Nearing in on a 25-year career in the shooting, hunting, and fishing industry, Biddle holds an Associate of Applied Science degree in Graphic Design from Oklahoma State University Okmulgee, is a graduate of Dale Carnegie, and has served as a volunteer BSA Scout Leader for the past 10 years.

Iron Valley Launches Innovative Online TV Programming for Dealers

Iron Valley Supply, an Alabama-based wholesale distributor of more than 150 of the nation's best-known products in the hunting and outdoor industry, has launched Iron Valley TV. Iron Valley calls this new video channel "an adventure culture content channel that celebrates the outdoor lifestyle and those in the outdoor sporting goods industry."

The channel enables Iron Valley (formerly known as Bangers) to create and deliver valuable marketing content that can give you, the dealer, an

advantage in the marketplace. Share it with your social media followers, use it to spark inspiration for your in-store marketing, or just use it as a learning tool to better familiarize yourself with some of the brands your customers are asking about.

Iron Valley has built out an on-demand 4K studio in their Birmingham headquarters, which allows them to livestream, use dynamic video backgrounds, and bring in guests remotely to participate in filming as needed.

See more at youtube.com/c/IronValleySupply.



This month's cover brought to you by:



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Fort Scott Munitions®, FSM® monolithic, solid copper projectiles are specially engineered to tumble when striking water-based tissue. This Tumble Upon Impact® TUI® design ensures that the distribution of damage primarily occurs internally instead of at first contact with skin, resulting in a clean ethical kill. Our ammo violently flips end-over-end once hitting fluid, cutting through everything in its path as well as creating a larger surface area of damage.



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The pinpoint accuracy and terminal performance of 9MM Luger TUI® ammo make it eminently suitable for civilian home protection and self-defense. Each bullet is constructed using only the best components, making this the grade ammo to insist upon when consistent performance is essential. In situations where lives are on the line, you can draw your weapon with complete confidence, knowing your skills will not be compromised by your ammo.

WHY YOU SHOULD SELL TUI® AMMO

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- Family-owned and operated since 2012 and going strong



Keep Employee Engagement High

If employees feel disengaged from your organization, it's time to restore the connection — with fierce transparency.

BY KEN WYSOCKY

Employee engagement is always one of the biggest issues facing employers. As well it should be: Studies consistently show that disengaged workers contribute heavily to lost productivity, low morale, high absenteeism and costly turnover, to name only a few of the detrimental side effects.

There is no lack of solutions out there. A Google search on the topic will reveal a staggering amount of information. But Susan Scott believes it's not all that complicated. Instead, the founder and CEO of Fierce Inc., a leadership development and training firm, proposes a two-pronged approach that's simple and effective and doesn't cost a dime: Create a culture where management connects with

employees through "fierce" conversations and operates with transparency at all levels.

"Organizations must connect with employees — and customers — at a deep level," says Scott, the author of two best-selling books, *Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work and in Life One Conversation at a Time*, and *Fierce Leadership: A Bold Alternative to the Worst "Best" Practices of Business Today*. "Human connectivity is where it's at right now. It's the next frontier for exponential growth for both individuals and organizations — it provides the only sustainable competitive edge. And most companies just are not there yet."

To support her contentions, Scott cites some data gathered

through an employee engagement survey conducted by TINYpulse, a Seattle-based company. Here's what the survey discovered from polling more than 40,000 employees at 300 companies around the world:

- Transparency is the No. 1 factor that contributes to employee satisfaction and happiness.
 - Team play and collaboration are among the top traits employees love about co-workers.
 - Only 42% of employees know their organization's vision, mission and values.
 - In terms of happiness, having great colleagues is way more important than having good managers.
- "In addition, 41% of the people that our company recently



surveyed believe that negative attitudes are the most detrimental factor in the workplace,” Scott says. “They affect morale and productivity and raise stress. About 23% of employees try to ignore (those with negative attitudes), and only 47% of employees believe managers would actually fire those toxic employees. And 88% believe that even if a person has amazing skills, that doesn’t compensate for toxic behavior.”

How do transparency and meaningful conversations factor into all this? Let’s start with transparency. In short, being open and honest is critical. That’s true whether it’s something as broad as sharing pertinent news and information (both good and bad) and talking about challenges the organization faces, or as small as forthrightly explaining to employees where they’re underperforming, Scott says.

“One reason we do so much business worldwide is that people are afraid to be completely honest and transparent,” she says. “We teach people the skills to be completely honest and to enrich relationships, not harm them — take the fear out of transparency.

“If things aren’t transparent, employees feel that keenly and deeply. And if you don’t give them information, they’ll fill that vacuum on their own with rumors. Moreover, you need to invite employees to weigh in on topics. One big thing about engagement is inclusion. Employees want to be viewed as valuable collaborators when companies set goals or solve problems.”

Companies where managers don’t hold employees accountable — especially those who are toxic — aren’t being transparent and, as such, hurt other employees who only want to get along and do good work. Why is this so difficult for some managers? Most of them find it difficult to confront others, so they avoid issues instead, Scott says.

“Generally speaking, we’re not taught how to do it,” she says. “And it’s not easy to do even for people who have the skills. So managers put off talking about problems until it’s ‘exactly the right time’ — when the sun, moon and stars are exactly aligned. They wait and wait and wait and it doesn’t happen, and meanwhile this person continues to wreak havoc behind the scenes. And suddenly you have a real problem.”

If managers just can’t find it within themselves to handle issues with honest conversations or develop close relationships with employees, then they shouldn’t be managers, Scott says.

“If someone is fundamentally hardwired in such a way that they can’t do those conversations or get close to employees, there are other jobs they could and should do,” she says. “I wouldn’t give up on that person right away, but I’d tell them if they want to advance, there’s an area where they’re lacking — ‘Let’s get you some training and talk about the impact your reluctance to have these conversations has on your career and your co-workers.’”

Meaningful and “fierce” conversations are a



necessary component of transparency. In fact, Scott says conversations are the single most important tool companies have for engaging people — as well as the most overlooked.

“The conversation is the relationship and our most valuable currency is relationships — it’s emotional capital,” she says. “Most conversations sort of water ski over the issue — skate along the surface. But it’s entirely different if you dive below the surface, where there’s a whole other world.”

In the end, business is fundamentally nothing more than an extended conversation with both employees and customers, and unfortunately, most companies fall short of where they need to be, she says.

“Employees desire more than just coming to work and doing a good job, and customers want more than just a fair price,” she says. “They want connectivity — close, playful, happy and fun relationships with people they interact with every day. And without that connectivity, employee engagement suffers.

“Organizations need to understand that they succeed or fail one conversation at a time, and it’s the missing conversations that cause the biggest problems. They need to accept that this is a skill set that’s critical to success.” **HR**

↑ Putting off difficult conversations only compounds problems with employees.



Layout Blinds for Waterfowlers

These three layout blinds will keep your customers dry, comfortable and well-hidden this waterfowl season.



BY MARK CHESNUT

For many waterfowl hunters, especially those who hunt over dry land areas or rice fields, a quality layout blind is as important as a good shotgun and shells. Not only do good layout blinds do the necessary job of concealing hunters from their overhead quarry, but they are also comfortable enough to allow an occasional snooze in when things get a little slow. (Don't ask me how I know!)

Before looking at some top layout blind models, it's important for hunting retailers to understand a little about these blinds and what hunters are looking for when shopping for them. First and foremost among the positive attributes is light weight. Face it, there's already enough heavy equipment involved in duck, goose and crane hunting — think guns, shells and decoys — without adding a heavy layout blind to the load. Portability reigns supreme, so keep that in mind when stocking your shelves.

Another important factor is comfort. I've spent enough time in layout blinds to know that an uncomfortable one can lead to lots of extra aches

and pains when it comes to bedtime. A good, padded seat is a must — and the more padded, the better.

Room is another critical factor in layout blinds. Hunters who are extra tall or extra wide appreciate extra room when in the field. And in most hunting situations, hunters need to store the rest of their equipment in their blind with them, too, so it's not left lying out where ducks and geese can easily spot it upon their approach.

Lastly, a top-quality camouflage pattern ensures that waterfowl don't look down and see something fishy among the decoys, then immediately head to the next county. Hunters' preference on camo patterns is about as individual as their preference on what kind of truck is best, so be sure the inventory you keep on hand offers them at least a couple of different, popular choices.

With that groundwork laid, let's look at three layout blinds that just might help you bolster your bottom line this waterfowl season.



BEAVERTAIL BIG GUNNER LAYOUT BLIND

For avid waterfowl hunters who don't mind spending extra cash for comfort, the Beavertail Big Gunner Layout Blind might be the perfect addition to your inventory. This is not your granddaddy's tow sack.

The key feature to this blind is the lift-assist mechanism that helps the hunter pop up and be ready for the shot when waterfowl are within shotgun range. With an ergonomically contoured backrest, a hunter's head and neck are supported during the entire hunt, lending hours of comfort in the field. Plus, the backrest has two adjustments for a subtle lift or a big push – depending on the size, age and physical condition of the hunter – allowing him or her to get into position faster and concentrate on the shot when the time comes.

The Big Gunner is roomy. It is 92 inches long, 40 inches wide and 20 inches tall. When collapsed, it measures 58 inches long, 40 inches wide and 7 inches tall. Weight is 26 pounds. Of course, that's not as small as many blinds fold up to, nor as light in weight, but the lift-assist technology will overshadow the more difficult transport for many hunters.

Special features of the Big Gunner include a larger face and mesh area



than many other layout blinds, interior shell holder loops and pouch, a zippered foot area for easy cleaning, sewn-in vegetation straps and a waterproof base. The frame is made of square aluminum tubing, and the exterior is 600 Denier polyester, which is both windproof and waterproof. The camouflage is Karma Wetland pattern. For more information, visit explorebeavertail.com.



FINAL APPROACH ELIMINATOR

Final Approach was started in 1993 by an avid hunter who was just looking for a way to stay hidden while remaining comfortable. Now, the folks at Final Approach (FA) call the Eliminator "The first layout blind ever designed." The original design of this classic style has been updated with enhanced materials for improved performance. Coated fabrics will keep hunters dry in the field and can withstand the abuse of any avid waterfowler. The full frame makes it comfortably roomy, with space for your customers' gear. It weighs just 19.5 pounds and measures 36 inches wide, 85 inches long (more than 7 feet) and 18 inches high.

The exterior is sloped to prevent shadows, and FA includes the original Stubble Straps to hold vegetation. A zippered "clean-out" door at the feet lets hunters quickly remove debris from the blind, and the fast-access flagging holes let a goose hunter wave a flag without being spotted. A comfortable padded headrest and camouflage face mesh make the Eliminator comfortable – in fact, FA specifies on its website that "Final Approach assumes no responsibility for you taking a nap in this blind and missing the next flock!" For more details, visit FAbrand.com.

ALPS DELTA WATERFOWL ZERO GRAVITY

Alps Outdoorz makes some of the finest backpacks available to hunters and outdoor recreationists. It's only normal that their layout blinds would be of similar, top quality.

The Alps Delta Waterfowl Zero Gravity falls between the Beavertail and Ameristep in price – packing in features and still priced low enough to draw the attention of waterfowlers with a variety of budgets. With no assembly required, the folks at Alps tout their Delta Waterfowl Zero Gravity blind as the most comfortable layout blind on the market.

The top selling point for the blind is the zero-gravity chair design that keeps hunters up off the ground yet keeps a low profile to fool approaching waterfowl. The blind's fabric body flares out on all sides to eliminate sharp corners for a more natural blend. To eliminate the need to clean it, the blind features a no-floor design, and backpack carry straps allow hunters to carry it into the field even with both hands filled with other gear.

Flared dimensions of the blind are 7 feet, 5 inches wide by 9 feet, 10 inches long, with a weight of 23.5 pounds. Other interesting features of the Zero Gravity include two side gear pockets for plenty of storage, zippered flag doors, stubble straps throughout for better concealment, heavy-duty thread stakes for use on frozen terrain and a padded headrest. The blind is available in tan, Mossy Oak Shadow Grass Habitat and Realtree MAX-5. For more information, visit alpsoutdoorz.com. **HR**





10 Muzzleloading Rifles to Ignite Blackpowder Sales

From vintage to modern day, muzzleloading is more than a flash in the pan.

BY KEVIN REESE

Not long ago, I drove straight into the path of a rain-wrapped tornado and suffered some large hail dents in my RAM Laramie as a result, just to shoot a handful of blackpowder and centerfire rifles at CVA and Bergara's Long Shot Tour, hosted at Fossil Pointe Shooting Grounds, near Decatur, Texas. I joked that even large hail and damaging winds couldn't keep me from scoring blackpowder impacts on steel; of course, Bergara had a wealth of centerfire hunting, precision and small-batch rifle systems on the shooting lanes, too. I own an Accura PR but do not get to shoot muzzleloaders as much as I would like, so media range days like this are a great way for me to keep my finger on this segment of the firearm industry's pulse.

I wasn't disappointed in the slightest — scoring consistent

impacts on steel out to 400 yards with the CVA Paramount HTR was exciting, to say the least, and it was the furthest I have shot any muzzleloading system. I also scored sub-MOA grouping with a couple Accura rifles. My range day takeaway was clear: There has never been a better time to shoot blackpowder rifles! Sure, modern day muzzleloading has seen respectable interest over the past half-century, but the past 20 years, moreover the past decade, has seen fever-pitched interest rise in blackpowder pursuits, and given what was revealed to us at CVA and Bergara's Long Shot Tour, the best is yet to come. All this is to say, muzzleloading is more than a flash in the pan. So, here are 10 muzzleloaders more than capable of igniting your blackpowder sales.



PEDERSOLI BRUTUS 94



PEDERSOLI ROLLING BLOCK



DAVIDE PEDERSOLI BRUTUS 94 HARDWOODS BREAKUP

"The philosophy of Davide Pedersoli was and is to refer to history, offering superior quality reproductions of historical firearms." As such, the company, founded in 1957 and headquartered in Gardone Val Trompia, Italy, is respected worldwide as a premier producer of repro muzzleloaders – but it didn't begin that way. Davide Pedersoli did not begin with muzzleloaders at all. From 1957 to 1960, Pedersoli exclusively produced shotguns. Muzzleloader production began in 1960, and by 1973, Davide Pedersoli muzzleloading rifles had become so popular the company ceased shotgun production altogether.

For today's retailers offering reproductions of historic muzzleloading rifles, the Davide Pedersoli .50-caliber Brutus 94 Hardwoods Break-Up is a great example of heirloom quality craftsmanship and is designed for rugged hunting adventures. The Brutus 94 boasts a Mossy Oak Breakup camo stock and forend and measures just over 40.5 inches from butt to muzzle. Additional features include a 23.75-inch barrel with 6-groove rifling and 1:24 twist. Similar to traditional centerfire hunting rifles, the Brutus 94 weighs just a tad over 8.5 pounds.

DAVIDE PEDERSOLI ROLLING BLOCK MUSKET PRIMER HARDWOOD RIFLE

When it comes to muzzleloaders, catering to traditionalists is a must, and Davide Pedersoli is a master producer of reproduction muzzleloaders – case in point, the .50-caliber Rolling Block Musket Primer Hardwood Rifle. Modeled after the 150-year-old Remington rolling block, Pedersoli's Rolling Block Musket features a perfectly reproduced action, rich walnut stock and forend, and a beautifully engraved receiver. According to reviewers, the Rolling Block Musket includes a crisp 5-pound trigger, perfect for hunting and also great for target shooting. Like the Brutus 94, the Rolling Block Musket includes 6-groove rifling and a 1:24 twist, but on a 28-inch barrel. While the longer barrel means a longer overall length of 44 inches, weight is comparable to the Brutus at 8.6 pounds (www.davide-pedersoli.com)

TRADITIONS FIREARMS NITROFIRE



TRADITIONS FIREARMS BUCKSTALKER XT

TRADITIONS FIREARMS NITROFIRE .50-CALIBER

Traditions' lines of muzzleloaders, centerfire rifle and pistols, and accessories is extensive. If your customers are looking for pistol reproductions from trader days gone by, Traditions has them. If they are looking for complete muzzleloader packages, they have those. Finally, if your clients are looking for modern inline muzzleloading rifles, Traditions' options are still varied. That said, two popular consumer options worth considering for retail stocking are the NitroFire .50-Cal Muzzleloading Rifle and the Buckstalker XT .50-Caliber Muzzleloader Redi-Pak.

Tradition Firearms' NitroFire .50-Caliber Muzzleloader pushes the blackpowder rifle envelope, with help from Federal and Hodgdon Powder, with an industry first: the Firestick. Federal's Firestick is a completely encapsulated charge employing a primer and Hodgdon's Triple 8 blackpowder. The shooter places the Federal Firestick in the breech, installs a 209 primer into the primer pocket, then loads a sabot bullet down into the barrel with a ramrod, and it's ready to shoot. The NitroFire rifle and Federal's Firestick couldn't make blackpowder shooting easier or safer, making it a great solution for new enthusiasts.

Unfortunately, the process also give the ATF a little bite – it does require a Form 4473 dealer transfer. That said, the NitroFire is drilled for scope mounting and boasts a 26-inch fluted, tapered, chromoly steel barrel with 1:28 twist, dual

safety system, aluminum ramrod with Quick-T handle, and an Elite XT trigger. According to Traditions, the Elite XT Trigger "is designed with a rebounding hammer and manual crossblock trigger safety." Traditions Firearms NitroFire appeals to virtually any modern-muzzleloader fan with finishes in Mossy Oak, Go Wild Rockstar, Realtree and black in scoped or no-sight models.

TRADITIONS FIREARMS BUCKSTALKER XT .50-CALIBER MUZZLELOADER REDI-PAK

Offering a complete kit is a great way for retailers to ease novice minds without shattering budgets, while also mitigating the need to round up every basic component – everything is packaged together in the Traditions Firearms Muzzleloader Redi-Pak except powder and primers or flints. Every Redi-Pak includes bullets, round-handle ball starter, fast loaders, cleaning tools, solvent and grease, inline nipple pick, 209 capper and of course, a Buckstalker XT .50-Cal Muzzleloading Rifle. The rifle features a lightweight, blued, 24-inch, chromoly steel barrel with 1:28 twist, synthetic stock with black finish, 209 shotgun primer ignition system, Accelerator breech plug, Elite XT trigger, dual safety, ambidextrous hammer extension and a Quick-T ramrod handle. Redi-Pak Buckstalker XT kits are available with or without a riflescope. (www.traditionsfirearms.com)





CVA PARAMOUNT HTR

CVA is recognized worldwide as a premium producer of modern inline muzzleloaders, and here in the U.S., as the industry's best-selling blackpowder brand. The company started as a traditional sidelock blackpowder manufacturer and also produced DIY builder kits. In 2021, CVA inches ever closer to centerfire rifle performance; in fact, CVA's new Paramount HTR as an example, the company now attains comparable velocities (2,400 fps to 2,800 fps), sub-MOA accuracy and jaw-dropping, repeatable, long-range impacts.

The recent unveiling of CVA's Paramount HTR (short for Hunter) Muzzleloader Rifle created significant blackpowder industry buzz related to purported long-range capabilities. The Paramount HTR is designed for optimum performance from Blackhorn 209 super-magnum charges and PowerBelt ELR bullets (225-grain for .40-cal. and 285-grain for .45-cal.). Available in .40- and .45-caliber models. For accuracy, Paramount HTR rifles boast a free-floating, nitride-treated, stainless steel Bergara barrel and match-grade TriggerTech trigger. Bergara has long been known for producing world-class barrels. Perfect for hunting

as well as precision shooting, the Paramount HTR also features a lightweight synthetic stock with adjustable comb, internal aluminum chassis and camouflage finish. For customers looking for long-range accuracy and longer, more confident shots, the Paramount HTR is sure to be a top choice.

CVA ACCURA MR-X

The Accura has been a cornerstone of CVA success for years now, and the MR-X (Mountain Rifle) is a welcome addition to the lineup. New for 2021, the MR-X is perfectly suited for hard-core hunting in exceptionally wild places; of course, the shorter, lighter design also is great for flatlanders hunting in heavily wooded areas and thickets. The Accura MR-X includes a synthetic stock with camouflage and black finish options, as well as an adjustable comb, and a Bergara 26-inch, nitride-treated, stainless steel barrel complete with a Cerakote finish. Accura MR-X muzzleloaders also feature a quick take-down design for easy cleaning and compact carry, and a collapsible carbon-fiber ramrod. Accura MR-X muzzleloaders are available in .45- and .50-caliber models. (www.cva.com)

THOMPSON/CENTER ARMS IMPACT!SB



THOMPSON/CENTER ARMS IMPACT!SB

An industry-changing collaboration between Warren Center and the K.W. Thompson Tool Company gave rise to Thompson/Center Arms (TC) in 1967. At the time, Center and Thompson produced Warren Center Contender break-action handguns, and in 1970, the company began production of muzzleloaders, beginning with a Hawken-style rifle. The rifle was an immediate success. Since then, Thompson/Center Arms has diversified. The company still produces high-quality, traditional reproduction muzzleloading pistols and rifles, but continues to produce modern handguns, centerfire rifles and inline blackpowder rifles, too. Two ultra-popular rifles from the Thompson/Center lineup sure to appeal to demanding shooters at both ends of the price-point spectrum are the Impact!SB and the Pro Hunter FX.

Thompson/Center Arm's Impact!SB offers premium break-open-action, single-shot performance at a remarkably low price point – perfect for next-generation, cost-conscious and novice muzzleloading shooters. The Impact!SB features a sliding hood design for more efficient loading and cleaning, triple lead Speed

Breech for faster breech insertion and removal, 1-inch stock spacer to adjust length of pull, fiber optic sights and a blued magnum 26-inch barrel. The Thompson/Center Arms Impact!SB is available in .50-caliber and handles up to 150 grains of blackpowder.

THOMPSON/CENTER ARMS PRO HUNTER FX

The Thompson/Center Arms Pro Hunter FX takes the best features of the Encore Pro Hunter XT and fits them into a more affordable blackpowder rifle without the Encore's interchangeable barrel feature. As for features, your discriminating clients can expect the best. The Pro Hunter FX boasts a Weather Shield break-open action, 26-inch fluted barrel, FlexTech recoil-reducing stock, engraved frame, QLA Muzzle System and TC's new Speed Breech 3 breech plug. Other features sure to win over your adventure-seeking customers include a reversible swing hammer for easy access under optics and enhanced ambidextrous use. The Pro Hunter FX is available in .50-caliber with black or Realtree finish. (www.tcarms.com)



LYMAN TRADE RIFLE



LYMAN DEATHSTALKER



LYMAN TRADE RIFLE

143 years after William Lyman's No. 1 Tang Sight was unveiled, improving the Vernier sight for precision shooting in less desirable light conditions, Lyman Products Corporation is still alive and doing fine in our beloved firearms industry. Best known nowadays as an industry-leading reloading equipment manufacturer, Lyman's product line is actually pretty diverse and includes muzzleloading rifles. The good news for diehard traditionalists is that Lyman's muzzleloaders, like Pedersoli, hold fast to purist traditional percussion and flintlock designs. One such muzzleloading rifle sure to be a customer favorite is the Trade Rifle.

The Lyman Trade Rifle features a European walnut stock with brass accoutrements, casehardened-finished lock, single trigger, blued 28-inch octagon barrel with 1:48 twist and open dovetail sights. The Trade Rifle's length of pull is 14 inches and overall length and weight are 45.5 inches and 8

pounds, respectively. Lyman's Trade Rifles are available in .50-cal. and .54-cal. percussion and flintlock models.

LYMAN DEERSTALKER

Like the Trade Rifle, Lyman's Deerstalker certainly looks the vintage part, but it also sports modern-day features muzzleloader hunters are sure to appreciate, like a thick rubber buttpad and open, adjustable fiber-optic sights. Vintage aesthetics include a rich walnut stock, single trigger, delrin ramrod and a 24-inch octagon barrel, blackened to eliminate glare, with 1:48 twist. The Deerstalker measures 41 inches with a 14-inch length of pull, weighs just 7.5 pounds and is available in both .50-cal. and .54-cal. with flintlock and percussion ignition systems. Lyman also offers the Deerstalker in a .50-cal. flintlock for your left-handed customers! (www.lymanproducts.com)

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10 Questions With EOTECH

John Bailey, VP of marketing and product management for EOTECH, discusses the company's history, its current product lineup and lessons learned during the pandemic.

BY DAVE MAAS

EOTECH (www.eotechinc.com) manufactures professional-grade optics in the following categories: holographic sights, hybrid sights, magnifiers, riflescopes, and thermal and night vision. The company is probably best known for its Holographic Weapon Sights (HWS), which have been designed and built in the United States — specifically Ann Arbor, Michigan — since 1996. EOTECH entered the very competitive market of variable-powered riflescopes in 2016 with the introduction of its Vudu lineup.

Hunting Retailer recently caught up with John Bailey, VP of marketing and product management, to learn

about EOTECH's history, its current lineup of top-notch sights for hunting, and the company's plan as shooters and hunters hope to put the pandemic in the rearview mirror.

HR: Thank you for taking the time to visit with *Hunting Retailer*. Your company has an interesting history, which began on a college campus, correct?

Bailey: That's right. Holography goes way back to the 1940s with some scientists at the University of Michigan approaching the U.S. Air Force with a research proposal. As technology advanced, holographic prototypes were demonstrated for use in helicopter gun-ships. It wasn't until the mid 1990s when the process and parts miniaturized to a point where it was realistic to develop something for small arms. EOTECH was formed and spun off from the Environmental Research Institute of Michigan to become an independent business. The first generation of holographic sight was developed. Shortly after its initial introduction, EOTECH actually developed and launched an archery sight, as well, with some really cool three-dimensional reticles.



HR: Like many new hunting and shooting products, EOTECH introduced its HWS at the SHOT Show. How was it received by the outdoor industry?

Bailey: Back when we produced the first holographic sight for use on a firearm, EOTECH wasn't a brand or recognizable name in the industry. To get the best traction on this new technology, we licensed the product to Bushnell and called it the Hologsight. Bushnell introduced it at the 1996 SHOT Show, and the sight won the Optic of the Year award. Bushnell certainly helped validate

the technology and generate initial demand, but it wasn't until the Hologsight was shown to a few U.S. Special Forces guys that the demand really took off. SF saw its speed to target, versatility and two-eyes-open shooting benefits and reached out to EOTECH to develop a ruggedized, military version. This is where the addition of the aluminum hood, brightness settings specific for night-vision use, better waterproofing, and 1913 rail compatibility were added, making it a robust, dependable combat optic. This put EOTECH on the map.

↑ Though EOTECH started with holographic sights, the company has also found success with more traditional riflescopes and other products.



HR: There's a great deal of confusion among many hunters between holographic sights and red-dot sights. What's the difference?

Bailey: The EOTECH HWS is often lumped into the category of red-dots. It is true that it does have a red dot, but the differences between red-dot technology and holographic technology are many.

First, red-dot sights are simple in design. They consist of an LED light positioned at the rear of the sight that is aimed at the front lens. The lens has filters that bounce or reflect the red light back to the user in the form of a dot. One limitation is that the dot needs to be big enough for the user to find quickly and align with their target, but small enough that it doesn't obscure the target and reduce accuracy. Holography overcomes this compromise. EOTECH can incorporate any reticle design to include things like stadia lines, ballistic holds and range estimation. The most common reticle, known at times as the "doughnut of death," is a 68-MOA ring with a 1-MOA aiming dot. Because the HWS is powered by a laser diode, and not an LED, the aiming dot is a true point source and offers the smallest dot in the industry. Here you have a large reference ring to get you on target quickly, but a very precise aiming dot to provide the best accuracy.

A major limitation for red-dots is that the dot is at a different focal



plane than your target. This causes the user to shift their focus slightly to focus on the dot and then shift back to the target. An HWS reticle is focused at the target plane so you don't have to shift your focus. You maintain your target focus and see your reticle clearly.

Another advantage the HWS has is that it is not dependent on the front glass for the reticle. In fact, if the user were to experience a catastrophic incident where the front glass were to break or be damaged, the sight would still work and maintain zero. Further, the back glass, where the reticle is captured, can also be broken and the user will still be able to see and use the reticle

in the remaining pieces of glass. Red-dots are dependent on their front glass to reflect the dot back to your eye, and if damaged or broken, the dot may not be seen or zero maintained.

Lastly, there several other advantages like square window for better field of view, common battery options, an integrate mounting base that removes the need for a mount, and the HWS is 100% made in the USA.

HR: For two decades, your HWS has been chosen by U.S. Special Operations, elite Army units and the U.S. Marine Corps as their preferred close-quarter combat optic of choice. Why?

Bailey: There isn't just one reason. All of these military units tested EOTECH products as well as several other red-dots. The EOTECH HWS was proven to be faster to target, faster for follow-up shots, and with a wider field of view — three things that make them better at what they do. Also, the small aiming dot gives them more accuracy and less target obscurity, and the 68-MOA ring around the dot not only gave them crude range estimation capabilities, but the



↑ The author used an EOTECH holographic sight on a recent coyote hunt.

bottom of the ring provided an up-close-and-personal aiming point for indoor, CQB engagements.

HR: Do the reasons why the HWS excels in close-quarter combat translate into the field for hunters, specifically those pursuing turkeys and predators?

Bailey: Absolutely. All of the benefits military and LE operators take advantage of translate directly to other shooting disciplines like competitive, recreational and hunting. Our small aiming dot gives them the most accuracy for a non-magnified optic. The ring gets them onto the target faster. But when it comes to turkey and predator hunting, the HWS is hard to beat. For turkeys, a huge advantage is that the 68-MOA ring represents their shotgun shot pattern. Put the turkey's head in the ring, and pull the trigger. It is that easy.

For predator hunting, magnified riflescopes might be the better tool



← A peek inside the EOTECH factory.



for certain situations, but the HWS, especially when used with our 3X (G43) or 5X (G45) magnifier, can provide both medium and close-range shooting by simply pushing the magnifier out of the way. The 1-MOA aiming dot is ideal for smaller targets like coyotes, fox and bobcats. Oh, and by the way, the HWS aiming dot does not grow when you view it through magnification. Because it is a true point source, the dot size doesn't change, while the target grows 3X or 5X. This gives the hunter added accuracy in placing the perfect shot. This is not true for traditional red-dots; the dot will grow at the same rate as the target, so there isn't as big of an advantage.

HR: EOTECH entered the very competitive market of variable-powered riflescopes in 2016 with the introduction of its Vudu lineup. What should hunters know about Vudu riflescopes?

Bailey: The Vudu line of riflescopes were designed for the hunter or shooter who won't compromise on quality, performance and clarity. Vudu scopes offer several features such as zero-stop turrets, a one-piece fluid eyepiece for easy manipulation throughout the magnification range, reticle illumination through either etched reticles or wired fiber-optic dots, as well as reticles designed for all disciplines. The clarity of the glass and the scope's light gathering capabilities are common compliments we receive with these scopes. I don't think any hunter would be disappointed with these scopes on their once-in-a-lifetime hunt.

HR: EOTECH offers similar size/magnifications in its Vudu lineup in both FFP (first focal plane) and SFP (second focal plane) options. Do your hunting retailers stock both versions, or do SFP models dominate their sales?

Bailey: Our hunting retailers have been known to carry both SFP and FFP Vudu scopes. This might be because they cater to other

types of shooters, but most hunters do prefer our second focal plane offerings. This is primarily because they like to keep the fine crosshair or dot throughout the magnification range for more precise shot placement. In addition, most long-range hunters will be equipped with a laser rangefinder to determine distance to target, so the range estimation capability throughout a FFP magnification range is less important to them.

HR: Dealers have a lot of brands from which to choose when it comes to variable-powered riflescopes. What sets EOTECH apart from its competition in regards to dealer support?

Bailey: I think dealers know that any product EOTECH launches are of the highest quality and are extremely dependable. We don't compromise on components, features, warranty or customer service. We also offer our dealers

“Our goal is to make it easy to deal with EOTECH. We want to build long-lasting partners, so margins, on-time deliveries, marketing support and immediate response times are all important.”

support through advertising co-op, promotional support, MAP pricing to preserve their margins, and even a range program that provides EOTECH products for their demo guns. Our goal is to make it easy to deal with EOTECH. We want to build long-lasting partners, so margins, on-time deliveries, marketing support and immediate response times are all important to build that trust.

HR: In 2005, EOTECH was ac-



↑ Inset: the EOTECH 1-8x SFP scope

quired by defense contractor L-3 Communications (now called L3Harris), but in 2020, it once again became a stand-alone company. What are the advantages of being an independent business?

Bailey: When EOTECH was acquired by L-3, it immediately benefited from an infusion of money that helped grow the brand and meet increasing demands. But with that came a lot of corporate bureaucracy, red tape and multiple levels for decisions. This really slowed us down, and on top of that, EOTECH was the only commercial product and company in their portfolio, so we were often misunderstood or overlooked. Now that we are independent again, we removed the corporate stiffs and built a team that included many past EOTECH employees that were key to the company's initial success, along with other like-minded, proactive, eager individuals interested in building EOTECH back to greatness. Product development, investment, budget and marketing decisions are now all made inside the building. Areas like speed to market, communications to our channels, international licensing and

customer service have all improved since our Independence Day.

HR: How has the pandemic affected EOTECH? Did the company learn any valuable lessons?

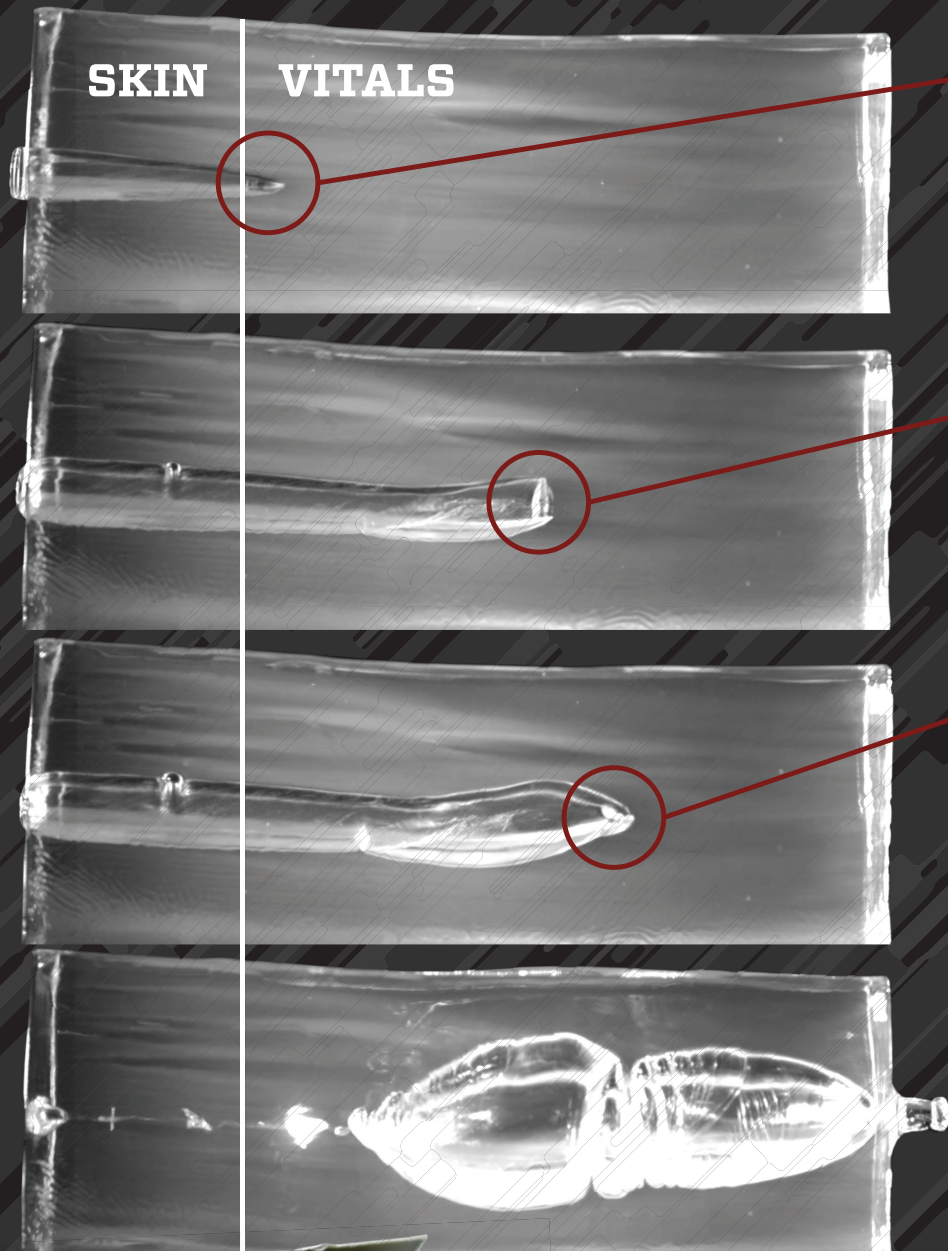
Bailey: The pandemic definitely affected EOTECH. Much of what we do requires a collaboration of people and efforts. In the early stages of the pandemic, EOTECH went entirely remote and were forced to shut down production for some time. This definitely slowed progress and sales. But what I think EOTECH learned throughout this ordeal is the value of labor. Because of political decisions related to the pandemic, it was very difficult to find and keep employees. This definitely impacted our business. But we also saw how this affected our suppliers as well, to the point where we were struggling to have parts in hand to build our products. It was a real snowball effect that ripped through our industry and others across the country. Between our management team making critical decisions and our supply chain using their relationships to keep supply flowing, we managed to get through with minimal negative impact. **HR**





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Pursuing Profitable Partnerships

You can't be everything to every customer — but you might be able to partner with other businesses to meet more of their needs.

BY MICHAEL D. FAW

An obstacle for nearly all hunting retail focused businesses is limits. Limits can reduce the efforts to serve customers — and create challenges to be more profitable. Along with limited floor and storage space, many hunting retail centers also face limited time and resources to serve customers and grow in scope. When you can help customers meet their needs and wants, they are far more likely to return to your business in the future which means more register rings — for you.

As a business, there are simply limits on what you can do and what you can offer. So what is one way to overcome limits? Partnerships.

There are very few businesses where it's one-stop-shopping for everything offered by retailers — and needed by customers — in the hunting world. Partnering could help you meet your needs and those of your customers. Note that this information is not about taking on a business partner as a co-owner of your business, but it's more about establishing working relationships that help you keep your customer base happy.



Partner Up

“We have several businesses that we have great working relationships with for things we don’t/can’t do,” says Noemi Skok, co-owner of the Gun Shack in San Antonio, Texas. “Gun Shack takes great pride in the fact that we strive to maintain positive and mutually beneficial



↑ The Gun Shack partners with Jeff’s Gun Shop for gunsmithing, Bandera Gun Club for range time, and a local taxidermist.

relationships with several local small businesses. We feel that there’s plenty to go around for everyone, and we can’t be experts at everything. We are happy to send a customer to someone with more expertise in a certain area. This leaves the customer happy, creates goodwill with both the business and the customer, and hopefully results in more business for us in the long run.” Working with partners can help you grow your business because customers’ needs are met.

The list of partnerships created and developed over the years by Lance and Noemi Skok reads like a directory of necessary services and specialties in the hunting industry. These partnerships and benefits include:

1. Gunsmithing services with Jeff Lozano, owner of Jeff’s Gun Shop. He has machinery that the Gun Shack doesn’t have and also has many years of experience repairing old rifles. Gunsmithing services is a frequent request by Gun Shack customers.

2. Gun range requests by customers at the Gun Shack are sent to the nearby Bandera Gun Club. J.M. Clements, the owner does an excellent service, and he’s friendly and reasonably priced. His outdoor gun range helps Gun Shack customers be better prepared for the upcoming hunting season.

3. Taxidermist requests by Gun Shack customers are sent to Jennifer Webster,



the owner at J&J Taxidermy. Yes, she has a female-owned taxidermy business and Noemi Skok is super proud of this partnership!

4. Training requests by Gun Shack customers are sent to Tim Reedy, the Chief Instructor & Rangemaster with nearby TDR Training. He offers classes plus private lessons. Tim is an exceptional and passionate instructor, and Gun Shack receives nothing but terrific feedback from our customers on him.

5. In accessories, Gun Shack has a well-developed partnership and refers customers to Nick, Gangi, the owner of On Your Own 6 Designs. Nick makes custom pistol and magazine holsters to meet demands, and the Gun Shack also carries his products in their retail store, along with sending people his way for anything the retailer doesn't have in stock.



Outsourcing the Necessities

It's a fact: the hunting industry offers so much gear, rifles, optics, clothing, packs, knives and a wide array of accessories, plus more, that the annual Shooting, Hunting and Outdoor Trade (SHOT) Show spans more than 700,000 square feet — roughly the size of 12 football fields. That's a lot of potential products and goods to sell to customers, but warehouse and floor space create limits and barriers for all hunting retailers. Too much stuff, too little space and time.

If you don't have the space, manpower or knowledge to handle

↑ SHOT Show is a demonstration of just how large this industry is. Surely you can find *someone* to partner with!

..... multiple customer requests on the same topic, try establishing partnerships with other local or regional businesses. These partnerships could include another business or shop that provides firearms repair, setting up hunts with an outfitter in your area, and working with a rental center that offers hunting related gear or other services that you do not stock but your customers frequently ask about. The key to great partnerships is often finding and working with those

businesses that are a good fit with your business, can be trusted, and are willing to work together. Not to be overlooked in the partnership arena are local travel planners, local tourism offices, hunting dog trainers, and many others. Partnerships to pursue should be guided by numerous customer requests and your ability to find a right fit.

It is important to remember you put your reputation — and that of your business — on the line when recommending and working with these outside-the-doors services. There are many things that you and partners need to work together on to build strong business partnerships. If they send customers back to your front door, offer to create displays or show their wares in your store, or help with advertising, promotions or events, you are off to a great working partnership. Only time can reveal if it's a match in the business world.

“We have a gunsmithing partnership with Dick Williams’ Gun Shop in Saginaw,” reports Jeff Poet, owner of Jay’s Sporting Goods with stores in Clair and Gaylord, Michigan. “We send customers to him for services

↑ If firearms are really your thing, why not partner with a local archery pro shop to help customers whose bows need attention?



↑ Jeff Poet with Jay's Guns Shop shows off a flier from another business he partners with.





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↑ Why not partner with a local taxidermist? At the very least, the two of you can refer hunters to each other's businesses.

beyond the normal things we do, such as mounting optics, slings and other add-ons. We have always outsourced our gunsmithing, and it's partnerships we've used for nearly 50 years now."

There are many ways to pass along information to your customers that you have business partners who provide additional services. "Williams provided us with a flyer that has a map to their location, includes their hours that they are open, and lists some of the services they offer," continued Poet. "We hand that to our customers, but we also sometimes accept firearms and pass those to Williams' for work." Jay's Sporting Goods also once leased space inside their retail center to a taxidermist who met customers and secured business on-site. That partnership lasted more than 15 years.

Good partnerships are also two-way streets for many businesses. "We know that since we are a leading hunting goods source in the region and we have items other places don't, Williams often says 'go up and see Jay's.' He sends them up to us and hands them one of our business cards that we provided," says Poet.

Working together to promote products and services that do not overlap in businesses seems to be one key to a good partnership relationship. Both businesses can also keep their customers happy.



↑ What do you *not* offer that your customers need? That's where you start looking for a good partner.

Guidelines for Partnerships

Establishing a working partnership with another business takes understanding, trust, and sometimes a contract. You will have to determine how much or how little you wish to work with another business and partner.

A first step is to assess if that person or business shares the same commitment to

customer service and values in quality and workmanship. The services they perform and products they deliver to your customers reflect back on you because you sent the customer there. It's important to also choose a partner who complements the goods and services you already offer. Any overlap in goods or services could become an issue in the days and years ahead. You often have to develop these partnerships over time.

If the partnership involves any exchange of money, information, client intel or other exchanges that could harm your business or customer base in the years ahead, consider writing a contract. This relationship would also

"It's important to choose a partner who complements the goods and services you already offer. Any overlap could become an issue in the days and years ahead."

involve a level of trust and honesty. You must decide how strong you want to partnership to be and how the partnership improves your business. Many partnerships become profitable two-way streets because all partners took the time to understand the other business, the other customers, and the other services in the beginning.

Your imagination and your current business limits can help guide you in establishing productive and profitable partnerships. The rule to remember is that whether or not any money changes

hands, if you send a customer there, it's viewed by the customer as an extension of your business. Future sales to that customer could be based on their experience with your partner company. If that partner makes your customer happy, there are strong indicators your customer will return to your register because you solved a problem for them or helped them purchase something they wanted and you did not have or stock.

Partnerships can lead to more profits on various levels and at a wide range of times. Pursue them. **HR**

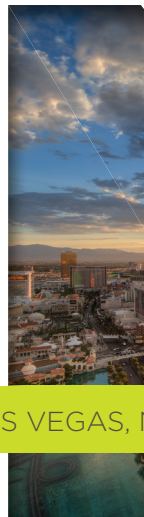




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Shelter From the Cold

Get to know the cold-weather gear that best serves your customer base.

BY LUKE LAGGIS

Legends are made in the late season, when the last die-hard hunters cling to frozen treestands hoping to outlast the ghost buck that's finally let his guard down a little to feed in the daylight.

The cold winds of November and December don't make it easy, but you can help. A carefully curated selection of cold-weather gear can give your customers the protection they need to last through the worst conditions.

I hunt primarily in Northern Wisconsin, and I spend a lot of time in the woods from October through December. Without good gear, it's impossible to stay comfortable afield. And forget about an all-day sit in late November if you're not fully equipped for the cold.

There's plenty of apparel aimed at keeping the elements at bay, but you can't stock it all. The challenge is making sure the items you do stock are effective and versatile, and that takes knowledge beyond the manufacturer's product description.

You can't fully test all the gear you sell, but you might gain some insight from my time afield in a variety of jackets, bibs, base layers and other gear. There are some clear takeaways.





SOLARCORE



Bibs

I've never been a huge fan of bibs, but the Scentlok BE:1 Fortress and Nomad Conifer bibs have swayed my opinion.

I knew the BE:1 Fortress bibs were warm the second I put them on. It felt like I was stepping into a sleeping bag. Thermal-mapped Thinsulate and 100% waterproof construction made me feel completely protected from the cold.

They also feature fleece-lined handwarmer pockets, zippered back pockets, and cargo pockets on the thighs with a snap closure and zippered side access. An elastic panel across the back gives these bibs more of a fitted feel around the waist. And they're extremely quiet.

I first wore them with heavy, grid-pattern long underwear. It was a warm combo to be sure, but the bibs are somewhat modestly cut and tended to bind a little against the heavy base layer. I later switched to a lighter base with a smoother exterior finish and was far more comfortable — both walking and sitting — and still stayed plenty warm.

The tops of these bibs are also somewhat modestly cut, but I didn't find that limiting. I appreciated the fact they didn't feel bulky under my jacket. On the coldest days I wore a heavy base layer and SmartWool hybrid half-zip under the straps and was perfectly comfortable without feeling like the bundled-up kid in *A Christmas Story*.

The Nomad bibs were a contrast to the ScentLoks in some ways. They're both light, quiet and warm and both zip to the knee, but the Nomads have a slightly looser feel. They were a little roomier and more accommodating of layers for longer sits, but they didn't feel overly baggy over lighter layers or when I was on the move.

The Nomads were more versatile in that regard. They're also a little thinner and lighter weight, with a bit more stretch. And while they might not be as warm as the Fortress bibs on their own, they were completely comfortable over my heaviest base layer.



Like the Fortress bibs, the Nomads have fleece-lined handwarmer pockets and cargo pockets on the thighs with a snap closure and zippered side access. But they don't have back pockets or elastic around the waist.

Both of these bibs have earned space in my gear locker, and they're deserving of space on your racks.

Jackets

While the Nomad and ScentLok bibs in this test overlap considerably in coverage, the jackets served distinctly separate roles in my hunting.

The ScentLok BE:1 Fortress parka immediately replaced a heavy, insulated wool parka I've worn the past few years in the coldest weather. The Fortress weighs considerably less — a huge advantage — and while it's not quite as heavily insulated, it stopped the

→ The Nomad Harvester jacket is built for the mid-season, but it's also a fine layering piece for hunters on the move in colder weather.



← The author gave the Scentlok BE:1 Fortress bibs a thorough test over the course of a Wisconsin winter.

wind better and kept me warmer overall. It's also more comfortable and much easier to move in.

The Fortress pretty much covered all the bases for me: It was quiet, it kept me warm and dry, and it had plenty of pockets without being overly bulky, as well as a functional and comfortable hood. Plus it has ScentLok's Carbon Alloy scent-control technology. The harness slot in the upper back is also an excellent feature.

My only knock on the Fortress parka is pretty minor, and maybe just personal taste, but I prefer an adjustable snap or hook-and-loop cuff over an elastic closure on heavier jackets. Worth noting, however, is that this parka is part of a system and the cuffs fit perfectly inside the cuffs of the BE:1 gloves.

The Nomad Harvester jacket is in a different category altogether. It's warmer than its weight, but it's not made for long hours on stand in truly cold weather.

The company classifies this jacket as a mid-weight, mid-season jacket, but with the right layers, you could wear it for a few hours on stand on a snowy December day. On colder



→ Smartwool's Intraknit 200 Pattern base layers are made for active pursuit – perfect for mobile hunters.

days, however, it's better suited to a more mobile hunting style. It actually excelled in that regard. And if your winter weather isn't quite as severe as Northern Wisconsin's, this might be all the jacket your customers need.

The Harvester was built to be light and comfortable, not to carry a day's worth of gear. Pockets are refined to two Sherpa-lined front zips and a zippered phone pocket on the chest. One day I wore a Tenzing pack over it, which was a nice combo for covering ground with all the essentials on a cold November day.

The shell material (polyester) has a soft, quiet finish and a nice stretch-factor that was accommodating every time I had to crawl over or under something. I also really liked the high pile on the jacket's liner and collar. It was comfortable in every aspect.

The Nomad jacket is a great combination of light yet warm, bulk-free while still accommodating warmer layers, and SilverZ scent control adds to its whitetail readiness.

Nice Surprise

The surprise of this whole test was how strong Smart Wool came to the table. I've enjoyed many pairs of Smart Wool socks over the years, but I wasn't too familiar with the company's other offerings.

The SmartLoft 60 Hybrid Half Zip is built on a polyester body with a merino wool lining and recycled wool insulation beneath the nylon upper shell. It has thumb loops on the cuffs, but it slipped easily into every jacket I wore it under without using the loops.

On the coldest days, I wore a heavy cold-weather base layer under it and the Fortress parka over the top. It was also great with a lighter long underwear top and the Nomad



jacket on less frigid days. On some 40-plus-degree days it was my top layer while working around the cabin.

This is my new favorite mid layer, no question. It's really an excellent combination of warmth, weight and fit, and it elicited more comments than any of the other gear I tested.

Worth noting, while I didn't have a chance to test them, the SmartWool Smartloft-X 60 pants look like they'd be an ideal layer under a pair of Nomad Conifer bibs when it gets legitimately cold.

What About Women's Wear?

Although the numbers of female hunters continue to grow, there's no denying that women still make up a small percentage of the shoppers who come through your store. Still, many stores don't carry any women's camo at all, so having a small selection could make you the go-to shop in your area.

Many brands make women's camo these days, with a few specifically dedicated to selling only women's hunting and outdoor apparel. One of the newer women-only brands on the market is DSG Outerwear, and they've already made a splash thanks to one simple concept: Sizing.

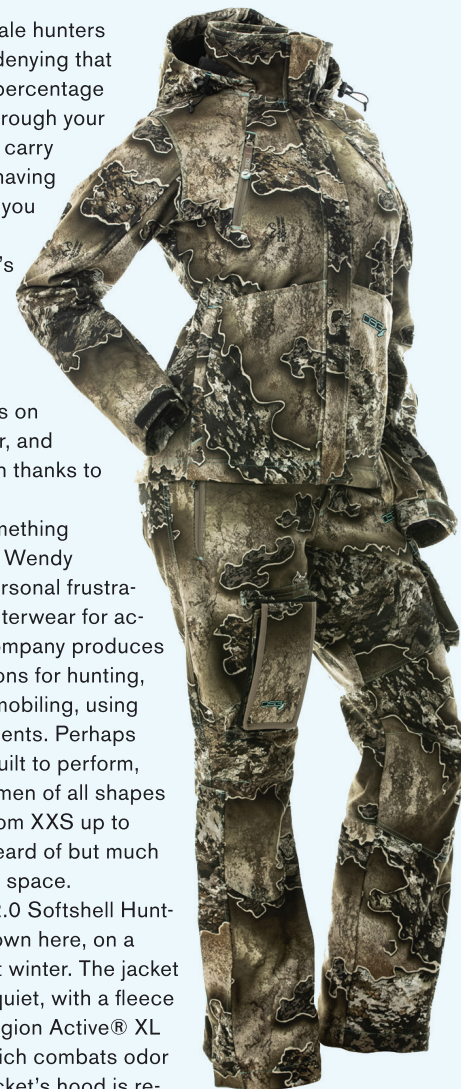
DSG stands for Doing Something Good, and it was founded by Wendy Gavinski after years of her personal frustration trying to find women's outerwear for active outdoor lifestyles. The company produces a wide range of clothing options for hunting, fishing, ice fishing and snowmobiling, using quality materials and components. Perhaps best of all, DSG clothing is built to perform, designed by women to fit women of all shapes and sizes. They carry sizes from XXS up to 5XL, which is absolutely unheard of but much needed in the women's camo space.

I personally wore the Ava 2.0 Softshell Hunting Jacket and Pants Set, shown here, on a cold, windy whitetail hunt last winter. The jacket and pant are super soft and quiet, with a fleece lining, and they incorporate Agion Active® XL dual-action scent control, which combats odor and neutralizes scent. The jacket's hood is removable and adjustable, and the cuffs adjust as well, for a customizable fit. The pants have an adjustable inseam from 32.5 to 28.5 inches to provide a tailored fit. I found both pieces to be excellent, warm outerwear when combined with thinner layering options underneath.

There are plenty of options in DSG's hunting lineup for all seasons, including a drop-seat bib that your female shoppers will appreciate when it's time to answer nature's call. Multiple camo patterns are available, and a couple of blaze orange and blaze pink options round out the line.

You might not have a lot of floor space available to stock women's camo, but if you can spare a few racks, consider stocking a few seasonally-appropriate options in a variety of sizes, and let shoppers know that additional sizes and camo patterns can be ordered. Dedicating a small amount of space to your female customers can pay big dividends, especially if your competitors aren't meeting shoppers' needs.

– Hilary Dyer, Editor in Chief, *Hunting Retailer*



Happy Feet

There's a lot of swamp in my hunting country, so I spend a lot of time in rubber boots. And Thorogood is my new standard.

The Thorogood Infinity FD rubber boots hold 1,600 grams of Thinsulate and feature a Solarcore lining in the toecap and foot bed. Solarcore is an aerogel lining that Thorogood says has been tested to retain 50% more heat. I can't verify percentages, but I can tell you these boots are warm.

The foot bed is comfortable, and a composite shank provides the right amount of stiffness in the sole. The ankle opening is big enough that pulling the boots off isn't a struggle, but not so open that they feel boxy or sloppy.

On the coldest days, I wore these boots with a pair of Darn Tough over-the-calf Hunter socks, and my feet were as warm as they've ever been in rubber boots. I should note that while my standard size was comfortable with very light socks, I had to size up to comfortably wear thicker socks.

These boots are on the heavy side and wouldn't be my choice for covering a lot of ground, but that's not



really the point of a boot like this. I stayed dry in the swamp and warm on stand. That's the point.

The Rocky Mountain Stalker boots filled a different role for me. They're warm and waterproof in their own right, but they're not a slosh-through-the-swamp kind of boot. I was immediately surprised by how light these boots are. I tried them on with a pair of thinner wool-blend socks and initially thought I might need a half size larger, but once I did a little walking in them, I was impressed with the fit and comfort. And I was able to wear thicker socks once they loosened up a little.

They have a moderately stiff sole thanks to a fiberglass shank with a

lightweight EVA midsole. Uppers are made of full-grain leather and 1,200-denier nylon. They are fully waterproof, with 1,000 grams of Thinsulate Ultra insulation. The lace-locking system is another nice feature. I always have to double-knot my other boots, but the Mountain Stalkers stayed tight with a single knot every time.

I figured this would be a good pair of boots, but I was surprised by how much I liked them. They're not ideal for swamp work, but they got it done pretty much everywhere else. If 35 degrees is cold in your area, these are all the boots your customers will need. If not, Rocky also makes a 1,400-gram version of the Mountain Stalker.

Socks

I'm kind of a sock guy. I get cold feet but I don't like to come in, so I'm always looking for better

↑ Thorogood's Infinity FD rubber boots were comfortable and warm, but somewhat heavy. They're best for treestand hunters.

socks. Smartwool, Under Armour, Carhartt, Wigwam — I own plenty. And Darn Tough stacks up.

The company sent me four pairs, Paul Bunyan over-the-calf and three versions of the Hunter socks: over-the-calf, boot and micro crew.

When Darn Tough says these socks are fully cushioned, they're not overselling. They felt more like a piece of gear than just a sock. In the way that a really good mid layer feels like it can be worn as a shirt or a jacket equally well, the Darn Tough socks have more of a built-for-weather feel in combination with a soft interior and comfortable fit. And they perform.

The heaviest socks Darn Tough sent, the over-the-calf Hunters, didn't fit comfortably in the Rocky boots, but pairing them with the Thorogoods provided an extremely warm and comfortable combination. The Paul Bunyans quickly became my sock of choice in the Mountain Stalkers. I wore them obsessively all winter long.

The micro crew and boot versions of the Hunters were nice, too, but



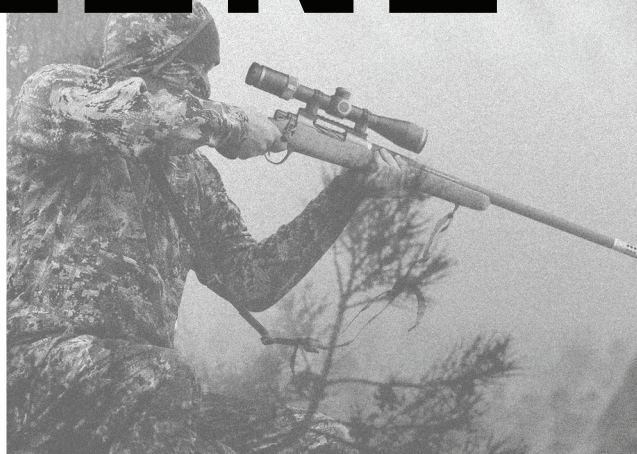


RIDGELINE

THE RIDGELINE IS OUR QUINTESSENTIAL HUNTING RIFLE.

Offered in a variety of chamberings, the rifle features a sporter carbon fiber composite gunstock and a stainless steel radial muzzle brake built around a light target contour Christensen Arms carbon fiber wrapped barrel. The Ridgeline weighs in starting at 6.3 pounds and is backed by the Christensen Arms Sub-MOA Guarantee.

Select chamberings are available in a left-handed.



CHRISTENSENARMS.COM/RIDGELINE



in cold weather, I'm partial to over-the-calf socks. They just stay up better.

Gloves

Much like feet, cold hands can ruin an outing, but they're a little easier to deal with.

The ScentLok BE:1 Fortress gloves are part of the complete BE:1 Fortress system and fit nicely with the Fortress Parka. They were comfortable and performed well on several hunts, even for someone who always gets cold hands. They allow a decent amount of finger dexterity in a fairly substantial glove. They're windproof and waterproof, with 60 grams of Thinsulate and a leather palm for good grip. And of course they feature ScentLok's Carbon Alloy scent control technology.

Nomad supplied my other pair of test gloves. The Harvester gloves are considerably lighter than the Fortress gloves, with a slightly stretchy feel and soft



→ Nomad's Harvester gloves are stretchy and comfortable, but customers who will be sitting still in frigid temperatures might want something a bit thicker.

Back to Base

Good base layers are key for the cold-weather hunter. Smartwool provides some good options.

I tested the IntraKnit 200 Pattern crew and bottom. Both pieces feature body-mapped mesh ventilation knit seamlessly into a quick-drying merino/polyester blend, with extra flex in the elbows and knees. The result is a slim-fitting, custom sort of feel, minus the compression factor that can make some garments uncomfortable.

These base layers are made for active cold-weather pursuits. They're warm enough to wear under your bibs or whatever you wear on stand — I liked them under the Nomad bibs — but they're made to



high-pile interior that's warm and comfortable.

These gloves aren't made for long hours in the cold, but I really liked them when I was walking. I was comfortable handling a gun and even a crossbow while wearing them. And they're touchscreen-compatible, which made pulling up the weather report or my OnX app a breeze.

move. The lack of bulk, combined with the flex zones and ventilation, make them ideal for hunting on foot without having to worry about getting sweaty and then freezing.

I would have preferred a more fitted cuff on the sleeves, and the waistband on the bottoms seemed heavier than necessary, but I really liked both pieces. They're versatile and comfortable, and I kept wearing them all winter.

Another Surprise

I mentioned that the Smartwool SmartLoft 60 Hybrid Half Zip was my surprise of the lot, but the Smartwool balaclava also stood out.

On cold days, I like having something around my neck and something thin under my hat, but I have never worn a proper balaclava that I found comfortable. They're always too tight around my neck or too bulky to be comfortable in my jacket. The Smartwool tackles both issues, and it fits comfortably under a hat. It's also warm. This will be part of my regular deer hunting attire until it's lost or destroyed. And then I'll buy another.

Share the Knowledge

Fit, function, features and capabilities — these are the kinds of things I

try to suss out when I'm in a store looking at gear. I want a good feel for how I can use it. This is where a knowledgeable staff member can be a huge asset.

If all you can tell me is where your bibs are or what customers seem to like, you're not helping me. And if you're not helping me, I find it much easier to go somewhere else or just order online. Being able to provide knowledge of specific items and the opportunity to try on those items in your store gives you a huge advantage over online retailers.

None of these products are the only solution, but I'd say they're all good options. While there's plenty of other gear you could and should consider stocking, you can be sure customers will appreciate the varied features and capabilities of the items covered here.

Quality and versatility go a long way in moving product out the door, and that's a good start. **HR**



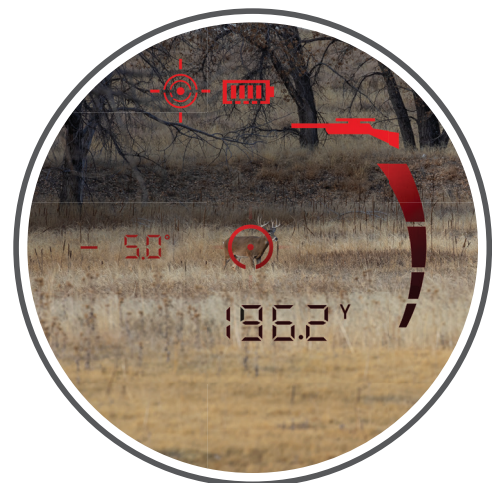


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A man in a blue and white plaid shirt is shown from the chest up, holding a rugged black mobile device against a tree trunk. The device has a camera lens and a speaker grille. The background is a close-up of the tree bark. The title text is overlaid on the image in white and green boxes.

Selling Safety for Hunting Camps





Hunting camps are ripe for theft because they're left unattended for long stretches of time. Here's how you can help customers protect what's theirs.

BY ALAN CLEMONS

Sometime, possibly in the next few weeks, you'll have a customer asking about cameras or security for his hunting camp. He'll describe arriving at his camp cabin or trailer to find a window smashed or the door torn off. Everything inside, he discovers, is ransacked and trashed. Anything of value is gone: the television, grill and propane tanks, the inexpensive "just in case" shotgun for someone who forgets theirs, the water heater, tools and even the refrigerator. The thieves knew, as most do, that midweek was the best time to strike because hunters only come just before hunting season and stay until the season closes. They aren't regulars and they don't come on Tuesday or Wednesday.

And so your customer, who now is restocking the camp and gets steamed every time he describes that bad weekend, wants to know what kind of safety precautions he can take. Despite years of being on hunting websites with his online friends and talking with other hunters around town who experienced being robbed — or worse, burned out — he didn't take precautions. He didn't do the easiest thing possible, which was to use cellular (or regular) game cameras. Or to bolster the doors and windows. Or leave nothing of value. Or have bright lights connected to motion sensors.

Should we have to do all that for a hunting camp? We shouldn't, but the reality is different. Bad people exist. The smart thing to do is help your customers prepare for these situations. "Plan for the worst, hope for the best" is not just a snappy motivational motto. It's a good course of action. Dissuade the bravado talk about rigging booby traps and other dangerous or illegal actions, too. Help your customers by selling these items they can use to protect their property and gear.





Security Lights, Sensors

Few things scream “Gotcha!” like three or four bright lights coming on around a building. Burglars may think twice, even if they believe no one is there, about trying to break into a building illuminated by bright halogen bulbs. When I was a kid, our barn was away from the house, but my father wired it so we could turn on the lights from our back porch. I remember at least twice believing someone was at the barn, where he kept our boat, and flicked on the lights. The would-be thieves took off through our pasture.

Motion sensors are optimal for getting these lights on at hunting camps. Placed around the main building, outbuilding, along a driveway or in another location, the sensors can be wired to the lights. Whammo! Bright lights everywhere. Motion sensors and lights are great for multiple uses: fishing or hunting camps, getaway cabins, even storage buildings used to house tools or equipment.

← Hunters would rather tell stories and drink tea at camp than have to deal with things being stolen or burned. Sell them precautions such as game cameras to help prevent issues.

Cellular Cameras

If you’re going to sell or recommend sensors and lights, definitely don’t forget about cameras that can transmit images or video to a cell phone. These typically are used in the field to capture images of deer, hogs, predators and other game animals. But they’re versatile. I don’t have a camp house, but I do have a Moultrie XA-6000 cellular camera, and it’s fantastic. “Bing!” goes the notification at noon, 3:12 a.m., 7:39 p.m., dawn, anytime of day or night. I didn’t think I’d like it as much as I do. The instant feedback is fantastic, and I plan to get some more cameras. My first experience with them was while deer hunting in Kansas in 2015 with some Bushnell cameras. At breakfast, our host would show us images of deer that moved through overnight. I was hooked.

These cameras can be strategically placed outside

and inside the camp house or buildings. They can be placed along driveways, at or near gates, and near buildings. Cellular cameras will need access to a wireless plan — most use ATT or Verizon. Images are sent to a phone app, which offers settings for high- and low-resolution, video, frequency, weather data and other information. These cameras are a relatively inexpensive security system that offers instant feedback.

In suggesting these cameras to



↑ Signs may not deter someone with ill intent, but they can bolster a legal case if it gets that far. Have a variety of signs in your store for sale.

customers, remind them to use old cameras (perhaps ones that don’t work anymore) as the obvious ones burglars might see. The cellular cameras should be placed higher in trees and pointing down, or hidden inside behind something, or situated where they’re not easily visible to anyone with ill intent.

Door, Alarm Security Kits

Bolstering the doors may reduce or end the effort from a burglar to get inside. Security systems such as the

← In open areas, hunters can use game cameras to catch trespassers and make sure their property is secure.



Door Alarm from Armor Concepts in Nashville, Tennessee, are easy to install. The reinforcement bars around the hinges and locks — the weakest areas of a door and frame — keep the door from being easily kicked through. The system takes about 30 minutes to install, without

removing the door. Again, it may deter a burglar long enough that they give up or try another entry point, but this length of time may be enough to get their faces on camera.

Alarm systems are good ideas, too. They don't have to be elaborate or tied into some government

Products for Camp Security

Game cameras are, in my opinion, the easiest and most inexpensive kind of security for hunting camps or your home. People don't think about them being around either place. Today's cellular cameras are more technologically advanced, offer a bevy of great features, and have a variety of price structures to fit just about any budget.

For the last year I've been using the Moultrie Mobile XA-6000, and I love it. I have it set on a three-burst mode with 24-hour "vision," meaning if something triggers the sensor, I get three images. I've seen everything from deer and turkeys to herons, hawks, otters and squirrels. Like other cellular cameras today, it probably has more bells and whistles than I know how to use or need. But I really like it and will be getting more cameras for my property.

Two that I would suggest to consider are:

– **SpyPoint Micro S**, which is powered by a solar panel and is compact. That means poachers and bad guys have less of a chance to spy it when they're slinking about. The solar panel doesn't require constant light from sunrise to sunset to be charged. You won't have to go to the camera to change batteries or pull an SD card, either. Mount it on a tree, fence post, secret spot or wherever you need to for the task at hand.
www.spypoint.com



– **Moultrie Delta**, an affordable option that uses the AT&T network, takes 32 megapixel images and has a .35-second trigger speed, longer battery life and a new CellBoost antenna for better reception. The Delta also has a built-in GPS for theft deterrence. Should someone swipe it, you can find the GPS coordinates and the location — and maybe find who snatched it.
www.moultriefeeders.com

One drawback to almost all game cameras is they sit flush to a tree. That's great for getting images of deer or turkeys, but if you need to mount it higher or on an angle, not so much. I used rocks or sticks to get my cameras on an angle until I found **The Wedge** from Extreme Hunting Solutions a few years ago. This tough, durable plastic wedge fits perfectly behind a camera, putting it on an angle. For those who want their camp camera mounted higher in a tree or on a roof corner, for example, these are great.
www.extremehuntingsolutions.com

– **No Trespassing signs** may be required by some states, along with other measures, to "officially" alert someone they are violating the law. Have a good selection of signs in your store to sell to customers. Among the most popular are those prohibiting hunting, fishing or trespassing in vivid, easy-to-read sizes and colors.



response network. Loud beeping, sirens or piercing screeching might drive burglars batty and cause them to flee if they get inside. They may be dead-set on grabbing whatever they can, but no thief wants to stick around even in a rural area if an alarm is sounding to wake the dead.

Locks

A burglar who believes he has time probably won't be deterred by locks, but it can't hurt to use them. I've been to camp houses and cabins that had locks on doors, gates and outbuildings. Whether it's a lock with keys or numbers to spin in a code, they may be enough of a nuisance to make a bad guy give up. Maybe. If nothing else, locks can cause them to get frustrated and look around, thus putting their face on the security cameras recording the images or video.

Uline offers the popular and time-tested Master Lock series, which includes Brass, Heavy-duty Steel, Outdoor, Disc and Bluetooth models. The Outdoor model, for example, has an impact- and weather-resistant cover to protect against ice, water and dirt. The Bluetooth model does not require keys, and you can easily add or remove user access. The Disc padlocks are shielded and protect

↑ Which lock is it? Landowners can use a good selection of locks, which you can sell, to confuse or deter criminals

.....
against bolt-cutters. Your customers may appreciate having a selection of locks for their camps, gun and bow cases, and other gear.

Gun Safe

Customers may not want to put a gun safe at their remote camp, but it wouldn't be a bad idea. You could help convince them of this. Why? Because it's a pain to try to open or remove. Billy Burglar probably isn't going to have knowledge of how to crack a safe, won't be carrying hacksaws and tools, and won't have a good way to haul off a big, heavy safe. Smash-and-grab robbers give up.

Customers with cabins may have places they could put a safe and secure it to the floor or wall, or put it in a closet or hiding spot behind a false wall. Several ways exist to secure and conceal a safe. Not everyone will want to do this, but some may consider it. Be ready to discuss the different features, including weight, whether the safe is fireproof and for how long, how to secure it to a floor or walls, and the items it can hold. **HR**





Create a Love-to-Work Culture

Here are three strategies for making your organization a place where people want to come to work.

BY KEN WYSOCKY

It used to be that prospective employees had to convince companies why they should be hired. But in today's job market, the tables have been turned: Organizations now have to convince job candidates why they're a great place to work.

A key question emerges as organizations arm wrestle for quality employees: Do people come to work at your company because they have to, or because they want to?

The difference is huge, and not only in terms of attracting great candidates. Studies also show a clear correlation between high levels of employee engagement and superior financial performance, including higher stock prices.

How do organizations help ensure their employees want to come to work, not have to, and thus attract the best candidates to their ranks? In

a nutshell, companies must create workplaces that encourage collaboration, foster a culture where they feel valued, and utilize technology that's familiar and user-friendly, says Jacob Morgan, author, speaker, and futurist.

"Employees these days have new and higher expectations," says Morgan, the author of *The Employee Experience Advantage and The Future of Work: Attract New Talent, Build Better Leaders, and Create a Competitive Organization*. "They care about things other than just money. They want to contribute to an organization and feel a sense of purpose.

"They also focus more on health and well-being. They're blurring the lines between work life and personal life. Plus, there's a fierce war for talent amid a skills shortage. All these factors and

more are forcing companies to figure out how to bring in the best and the brightest people."

Attracting these high-value employees is more difficult now because there's so much more transparency to the job-hunting process, thanks to company-review websites such as www.glassdoor.com and social media platforms.

"We used to take jobs based on the stories we were told," Morgan says. "Now organizations can't tell stories anymore."

Spaces That Engage

One of the three levers that employers can most easily pull in order to develop a want-to-come-to-work environment centers on physical workplaces that encourage collaboration.

"This one is the easiest one to see," Morgan



says. “Employers need to create spaces that support collaboration. Create collaborative areas such as conference rooms — places where people can write on the walls, solve problems and have healthy debates and discussions. You need to give employees as many choices as possible as to how they get work done.”

While this might not be practical on a large scale in your retail shop, workplaces with visibly collaborative spaces give off a positive vibe not only to employees, but to prospective job candidates, too.

“It’s like when you walk into someone’s house for the first time — you get a distinct vibe about that person,” Morgan says.

Moreover, a study performed by Steelcase, an office-furniture systems manufacturer, showed that the more options employees have about where they can work, including private spaces and collaborative areas as needed, the more engaged they feel.

If budgets are a concern (as they usually are), Morgan isn’t saying that companies must take a sledgehammer to existing walls and spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on workplace makeovers.

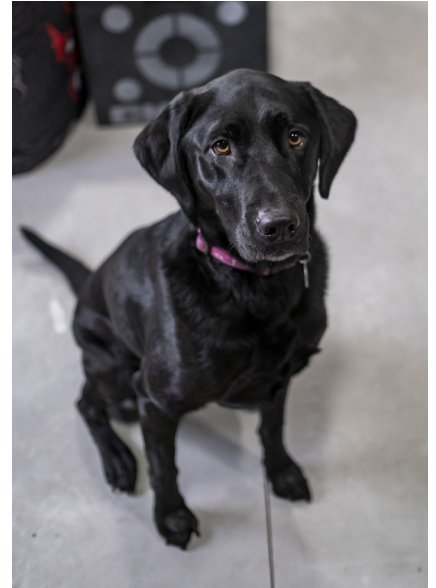
“None of these things need to cost a lot of money,” he says. “The simplest thing is to find out what employees care about and value and go from there. It doesn’t have to be a crazy, over-the-top kind of thing.”

“The simplest thing is to find out what employees care about and value and go from there.”

“Organizations need to put people who care in positions of power,” Morgan says. “We need more managers who genuinely care about employees — managers that believe every day that their job is to make people more successful.”

A key motivator that many managers miss out on is telling stories that connect the work employees do with the impact they have on customers and communities. When employees see that the work they do is part of a larger context — has a higher purpose with many ripple-effects on customers — they tend to take more pride in what they do and feel more engaged, Morgan says.

“Companies can use any number of mediums, such as videos, (newsletter) articles, posters, social media and intranets to tell these stories,” he says. “You just can’t go wrong telling a story.”



↑ Assuming they're well-behaved, of course, who doesn't love a shop dog hanging around?



↑ Employees are seeking workplaces where they feel valued. The line between work and personal life is increasingly blurred.

Managers Who Care

Another lever organizations can pull revolves around making people feel valued. That, in turn, is strongly linked to developing a roster of managers with high levels of emotional intelligence.

Technological Ease

The third lever to pull focuses on technology. Technology should be, in a word, easy. Using software or computers at work should be just as easy as using the technology that employees enjoy using at home. If it isn’t, frustration and reduced engagement tend to follow, Morgan says.

“Sharing something with a co-worker, for instance, should be just as easy as using Google Drive or email,” he says. “Employees should be able to view educational videos at work with the same ease with which they consume media online from Netflix. If all you’re offering employees is clunky and cumbersome interfaces, it’s just not a pleasant experience.”

Of course, it’s always a good idea to survey a workforce to find out what’s important to them in terms of workspaces, managers and technology. Those surveys can help organizations mine for valuable data that will help avoid wasting money on engagement efforts that no one wanted in the first place.

Morgan says, “You can’t make decisions until you know things, and you don’t know things unless you get feedback from employees.” **HR**



Review: Mossberg 940 Pro Field

Mossberg's new 940 platform was designed with input from famed shooter Jerry Miculek.

BY JEFF JOHNSTON

Most people don't know it, but the O.F. Mossberg company of North Haven, Connecticut, first began producing semi-automatic shotguns in 1986 for the Smith & Wesson company. In 2004 it introduced semis under its own name, the 935, and later its 930 models. While these guns were perfectly serviceable, in this writer's opinion they didn't offer enough differences to turn heads in a globalized, ultra-competitive market.

However, the last 15 years have been grand to America's oldest family-owned arms maker. While concurrently selling millions of its venerable model 500 pump guns (12 million to date), it found success in both the affordable rifle and handgun categories.







So in 2018, Mossberg decided to take another swing when it set out to build an improved semi-auto that would offer real advantages over the competition yet remain reasonably priced and true to Mossberg's blue-collar brand. For this they hired arguably the world's greatest all-around shooter in history, Jerry Miculek, and who better to consult? Since 2012 he'd used a 930 — albeit heavily modified — to win multiple 3-gun championships. In doing so, he knew two things: First, the 930 would provide a solid platform on which to build an outstanding new gun. Second, with his experience in a realm where one jam means losing valuable seconds and a winner's check, Miculek knew just what modifications were needed. What spawned was Mossberg's totally renovated Model 940.

Currently two versions are available: the 940 JM Pro for competitive shooting and the 940 Pro Field, a 12-gauge 7½-pound, all-around semi-auto shotgun for hunters.

940 Pro Internally

The real story of the 940 is hidden under its handguard. Much like a race car mechanic might overhaul a Chevy small block 350 by boring out its cylinders, expanding the exhaust system and supercharging it to maximize horsepower, engineers went to work on the 930's drivetrain.

Immediately they modified the action's piston, its sealing ring system, spacer and pusher assembly so it'd run more efficiently (faster and with less jams) with a wider range of ammo. The system features two large gas ports in the gas cylinder welded to the underside of the barrel. A robust, short-stroke piston assembly accepts the burst of gas from the fired shell and violently slams just ⅝-inch rearward, moving the bolt assembly rearward to cycle the action. The inside of the piston features machined grooves that reduce friction as it slides back and forth on the mag tube.

Engineers performed the same mod on the spacer tube: Grooves reduce surface area and allow fouling a place to go rather than just

without cleaning, compared to the 930's 500. That's what I call an overhaul!

Externally, the 940 features several key upgrades: Its buttstock is adjustable via five spacers and shims to alter drop at comb/heel and cast on/off. A modular buttpad system adjusts the gun's LOP from 13 inches to 14¼. These critical aspects of shotgun fit are imperative for intuitive shooting, recoil management and overall shooter satisfaction. The forend



↑ Author Jeff Johnston with his Gould's turkey, taken in Mexico with a 940 Pro Field.

adding friction during its movement around the mag tube. Jerry says that much like a car that is started will often leak water from its tailpipe, an amount of condensation occurs between these metal parts unless the gun is fired until it's very hot. The grooves in the 940's spacer perforation allow air to dry it out, preventing corrosion.

"It takes away some of the problems for people who do not perform any maintenance," said Miculek. In real-world terms, the 940 is touted to run 1,500 rounds

was slimmed and made flush-fitting to the receiver; this lends the gun greater pointability and also makes it faster to load when using competitive-type loading techniques. Initial Pro Field models employ a 28-inch, vent-rib barrel with screw-in choke tubes. It holds 4 + 1 rounds.

The 940 features oversized controls to reduce fumbling even while wearing gloves. The bolt release button serves another nifty purpose: With the gate manually depressed, a push will release a shell from the magazine tube so the mag can be emptied — or a single shell replaced for when a goose suddenly bombs the spread — without cycling each shell through

Mossberg 940 Specs

MOSSBERG 940 PRO FIELD

TYPE: Gas-operated semi-automatic shotgun

GAUGE: 12, 3-inch

BARREL LENGTH: 28 inches

WEIGHT: 7 pounds 9 ounces

MAGAZINE CAPACITY: 4 + 1

STOCK: Synthetic; adjustable 13 – 14 ¼ inches

CHOKES: Interchangeable improved cylinder, modified, full

SIGHTS: Front Hi-Viz bead

FINISH: Matte black

ACCESSORIES: Three choke-tubes, case, wrench, five shims, four spacers, three buttpad spacers

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: \$800



the chamber. Its safety is wholly Mossberg and located on the tang.

On the skeet range, the 940 came up to my eye naturally; instantly I hit flying targets without conscious thought, indicative of a gun that shoots where I look, thanks in large part to great stock fit and a well-regulated barrel. Furthermore, it loads like butter owing to its modified non-pinching gate. Even including a break-in period, I could not get the gun to jam with 1½-ounce loads and heavier. Its excellent trigger averaged 4 pounds 12 ounces pull weight. While its matte metal finish is fine, I'm told camo options are forthcoming.

The 940 delivered rich and symmetrical patterns with Winchester's AA Diamond Grade shells fired through all three chokes. I also fired steel waterfowl loads and turkey loads without fail; I even managed to bag a big Gould's gobbler with it. Recoil was on par with other gas-action semis in the 7½-pound weight class.

As for complaints, I wish it had a mid-bead for precise aiming while turkey hunting, though the receiver is drilled and tapped for an optic. My only other complaint is derived from its rather hollow-sounding plastic buttstock. While it doesn't affect performance, it's an area where Mossberg likely had to cut costs to maintain such a low price.

Even so, the 940 Pro Field is a performer in every aspect: It's light enough for all-day carry, reliable, fast, versatile for everything from ducks to turkeys, and it can be made to fit nearly any shooter so that it points intuitively and prints its pattern where the shooter looks. That translates to more hits on game and ultimately more game in the bag. For less than \$800 — and especially now that Remington's status is questionable — I can't think of a better semi-auto shotgun for the money. And perhaps best of all, this one's made in America by a company that's never lost sight of its core customers. **HR**

Gould's Turkeys With the Mossberg 940 Pro Field

In spring 2021 I had the good fortune to have traveled nearly 24 hours and 1,600 miles one-way to chase down a Gould's turkey in Mexico with Linda Powell from Mossberg and some friends. All things considered, this trip seemed a bit crazy on the onset, but it quickly turned into one of the best adventures one could hope for.

We had crossed the border in Douglas, Arizona and traveled to Rancho Mababi, located about an hour and a half south of the border near the town of Fronteras. Fellow hunter Eric and I were set up at an elevation somewhere around 5,000 feet and directly in front of seasoned turkey guide Joe Williams. My weapon of choice was a Mossberg 935 Magnum-Turkey 12-gauge shotgun topped with a Weaver Kaska Turkey 1-4X24 scope, but the buzz in camp was in Eric's hands — the new prototype Mossberg 940 Pro Field 12-gauge autoloader that adopts and improves upon many of the features of the popular 940 JM PRO. Mounted on these new field guns were GPO SpectraDot sights, and we had both Federal Custom turkey and Grand Slam turkey loads in camp. Temperatures ranged from the high 30s in the morning, rising to around 70 during the day, and with almost constant breezy conditions, the weather was perfect. I had brought some Nomad light turkey hunting apparel and their Killin' Time Turkey Vest, and that was really all I need.

So, there we were, sun shining, mountain breeze blowing, high atop a mountain in Mexico rich with anticipation of Gould's turkeys. After several hours watching jakes and hens with long, dull stretches in between, suddenly, there was some commotion above our decoys, and as I glassed, I could faintly see a big, bright red head attached to a fully puffed-out body of feathers, fanning away and letting all know the king had arrived. Our guide worked the decoy a few times, and Mr. Big began his 200-



yard march to our position. Immediately Eric got ready and in position to close the deal — we had pre-determined he was up first, and Joe and I were now spotting and staying still.

On Mr. Big's arrival, it took less than one minute to close the 200 yards — he initiated an aggressive attack, jump-flying over the decoy, ramming his spurs on the decoy on the way down, repeatedly. The attack went on for several minutes, with more and more feathers from the decoy's fan circling in the air in and around the decoy. Eric was just waiting for some separation so he wouldn't obliterate the decoy. His finger was on the trigger, safety off, red dot locked on target. In my peripheral vision at the edge of our field appeared another big red head. My plea went out with a whisper to hold up, another gobbler is heading our way at light speed, while our decoy's feathers continued to float in the air from the ongoing assault. Thankfully, Eric waited, Joe verified another shooter was coming our way, and we reset. I have seen this movie before, and most of the time it's a train wreck.

I readied my gun, and in seconds we had two gobblers in full-on attack mode. Right, left, up, down, swap-

ping sides, and not allowing separation or good angles for both of us to shoot at the same time. An agreement had been made that no 3-2-1 countdown was going to happen — only that I would shoot right and Eric would shoot left. After what felt like an eternity and included numerous flip-flops, we no longer knew which tom arrived first. But just like that, both gobblers gave separation and good shot angles, and with no signs, we fired nearly at the same time and doubled up on beautiful Gould's. One weighed just over 19 pounds and the other just over 22 pounds, both first-time trophies, and both beautiful examples of majestic Gould's turkeys.

Over the course of the next four days, our group of five was able to connect on four Gould's turkeys, two of which became the final turkey of two lifetime World Slams for Jeff Johnston and Rick Lambert. The team at Rancho Mababi was first class and put on a once-in-a-lifetime hunt experience. Thanks to Alice and Roberto for creating such a great place to hunt and enjoy more of the outdoors. Our outfitter Ted Jaycox and his team were exceptional; I recommend them highly.

—Derrick Nawrocki



HUNTING RETAILER

GEAR ROUNDUP

COLD-WEATHER HUNTING BOOTS

Warm boots mean warm feet, a warm heart and the ability to keep on keeping on when the mercury drops and the weather turns ugly.

BY GORDY KRAHN

Only when their feet are dry, blister-free and toasty warm are hunters able to eke out the highest level of efficiency during late-season hunts. Whether it's an all-day vigil in a ground blind or a long trek to an outback hidey-hole, selecting the boot that best suits that specific task will help your customers put their best foot forward. That means considering

all the features that make up a premium cold-weather boot and picking a model with the attributes that will serve them well when it comes time to put toe to turf. And don't make the mistake of thinking that one boot will fit every occasion. A bulky boot stuffed with 1,200 grams of insulation, for example, might not be the right choice for a high-country spot-and-stalk hunt

where a hunter will be on the go all day in difficult terrain. If you're a retailer that's in the boot business and understands this, it should be obvious that multiple sales could be a possibility when a customer struts into your shop looking for footwear. Be sure you have a wide array of models available for all types of hunting scenarios, and ensure that you and your staff have the knowl-

edge to help him or her make the right choices. Ask questions about hunting style, hunting destinations, weather conditions and terrain features, and steer them toward models and price points that fit their needs. And if it's necessary to sell them two pairs of boots to accommodate those needs, all the better!





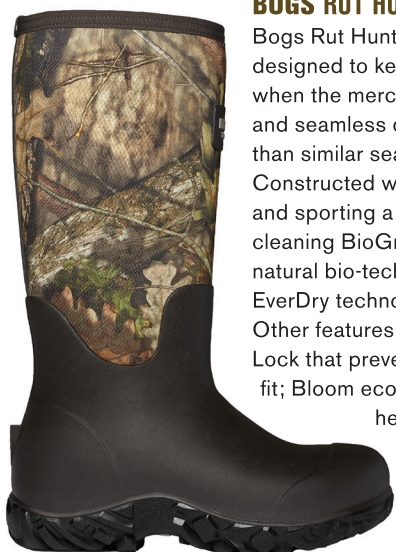
ECCO OUTDOOR TRACK25

Hunters can wander off the beaten path with confidence when equipped with durable Ecco Track25 mid-height boots (\$250). Lined with velvety soft Primaloft fleece for a warm and cozy feel, this water-repellent boot guards feet against inclement weather, and a rubber outsole ensures steady footing when traversing challenging terrain. Made with heritage leather combined with strong, smooth leather for a waxy aesthetic finish, the Track25 boot is treated with Ecco Hydromax technology for a water-repellent finish and uses FluidForm direct comfort technology that bonds the upper and the sole without the compromises of a conventionally stitched or glued construction. A direct-injected, two-component sole consisting of a PU midsole and TPU outsole delivers high performance in rugged terrain. www.us.ecco.com



BAFFIN HUNTER

The Canadian-made Hunter from Baffin (\$75) has a removable inner boot and rubber construction that give it a minus 40-degree F rating that will shrug off the coldest hunting conditions. Baffin combines leading molding technology with this foam-based liner to create a hybrid style of high-performance footwear. This equals more warmth, a better fit and superior comfort. The sole is made up of several advanced thermo-set polymers, combined to achieve a balance of warmth, protection, low weight and grip. This in combination with a Polymech foam removable lining system and innovative Timberwolf leather and Diamond-Lite insulated nylon uppers creates a cold-weather boot that's ready to take on the harshest elements. www.baffin.com



BOGS RUT HUNTER LATE SEASON

Bogs Rut Hunter Late Season boot (\$190) is designed to keep feet dry, warm and comfortable when the mercury drops. It is 100 percent waterproof, and seamless construction makes it 30 percent lighter than similar seamed boots as well as more durable. Constructed with Neo-Tech waterproof insulation and sporting a blaze orange lining, it features a self-cleaning BioGrip slip-resistant outsole and DuraFresh natural bio-technology fights odors. Max-Wick and EverDry technology evaporates sweat to keep feet dry. Other features include a reinforced toe and heel, Heel Lock that prevents heel slip and ensures an optimal fit; Bloom eco-friendly, algae-based EVA footbed that helps clean polluted water habitats; and Flex Width insole system that adapts to foot width. Rated to -72°F/-60°C. www.bogsfootwear.com

THOROGOOD INFINITY FD

The Infinity FD rubber boot from Thorogood (\$180/non-insulated; \$208/ 1,600-gram insulation) is a fusion of simplicity and complexity. Underneath and inside of this classic rubber boot silhouette is cutting-edge technology that bolsters performance and enhances comfort in the most challenging conditions. The Infinity FD Flex-drive anti-fatigue energy return system absorbs shock while propelling the user forward. Inside the 100 percent waterproof rubber body of the boot is an innovative liner that allows for lightweight Solarcore cold-crushing insulation, a commercial application of NASA space suit insulation that in recent testing retained 50 percent more heat than an identical boot with traditional insulation, according to Thorogood. The seamless body of the Infinity FD is constructed from scent-free rubber. www.thorogoodusa.com



LACROSSE ALPHA AGILITY SELECT WADERS

For fall 2021, LaCrosse introduces a new line of waders that provide ultimate mobility in adverse conditions – combining an athletic fit and lightweight feel with nylon and neoprene uppers that feature a removable 120-gram quilted liner and chest zipper. The Alpha Agility Select's (\$650) upper is made from abrasion-resistant, 100 percent waterproof nylon with double-stitched and taped seams. It has Y-back suspenders and a waterproof tech pouch for holding accessories and features hand-laid premium rubber over a 7mm neoprene core for flexible, waterproof comfort and 1,600 grams of Thinsulate Ultra insulation for lightweight warmth. Multi-layer rubber provides support and durability in high-wear areas, and a moisture-wicking, quick-drying polyester jersey liner keeps feet dry. www.lacrossefootwear.com





DANNER RECURVE

Inspired by traditional-style hunting boots while drawing design and technology cues from the company's best-selling hiking boots, the all-new Danner Recurve (\$190-\$220) delivers the next generation of performance in any type of hunting terrain and weather conditions. The Recurve features a Vibram SPE midsole and TPU heel clip to ensure long hours of comfort, with 7 inches of height for ankle support and optional Danner Dry waterproofing. It has a full-grain leather and nylon upper and breathable mesh lining with Thinsulate Ultra insulation. Other features include a cushioning open-cell OrthoLite footbed, nylon shanks and Vibram Recurve outsole with Megagrip technology, including adaptive lugs and flex lines for superior grip. www.danner.com



IRISH SETTER PINNACLE

The Irish Setter Pinnacle boot (\$199.99-\$239.99) features an ATC outsole with Ground Sensing technology that allows the sole to shape and contour to rocks and uneven surfaces to enhance underfoot stability. Multi-tiered, self-cleaning lugs provide superior traction and shed debris with every step. TempSens technology helps regulate the temperature within the boot, and lace-to-toe eyelets and locking ankle hooks provide a secure fit. The uppers feature UltraDry waterproofing for long-lasting protection and a memory foam collar for comfort. The Cushin Comfort tongue provides comfort in the shin area, while impact foam protects from objects striking the ankle. ScentBan scent control eliminates odors within the boot. www.irishsetterboots.com



LOWA R-8S GTX PATROL

Designed to insulate against heat and cold, the 8-inch Lowa Patrol boot (\$275) provides rigid ankle support and protection from the elements. Its outsole features 5mm lugs for excellent traction in dirt and mud, and its PU mono-wrap frame delivers superb lateral stability and long-lasting underfoot support with a shock-absorbing heel for all-day comfort. And it's also slip-, heat-, fuel- and oil-resistant. The Patrol's closed lace-loop system has a locking lace loop to allow the user to customize different tensions between the ankle and foot for walking comfort. The Patrol boot is waterproof and breathable and features a full-grain leather upper, climate control insole, DuraPU midsole and Lowa Patrol outsole. www.lowaboos.com



ROCKY MTN STALKER PRO

The MTN Stalker Pro waterproof insulated 10-inch hiker from Rocky (\$220) is made to tackle rugged terrain. The upper is waterproof full-grain leather, and its lace-to-toe design provides secure support while the Vibram Mountaineering outsole provides stability and traction. Shield guard technology boosts durability to the max and protects areas that receive the most wear and tear. Other features include supportive cement construction, padded collar, a Rocky Rebound footbed, fiberglass shank, speed lace hook and lacing system, and 400 grams of 3M Thinsulate Ultra insulation to keep feet warm. For added protection, this boot also has Rocky Vapor Pass technology with a one-year guarantee to keep feet dry. www.rockyboots.com

MUCK ARCTIC ICE

The Muck Arctic Ice boot (\$130) is specifically engineered to deliver grip and performance on wet ice – its Arctic Grip outsole pods and multi-direction lug design provide sure footing on multi-surface terrain. The outsole also features Muck's Vibram Icetrek full base layer for excellent traction on dry ice. For added comfort, heavy-duty 8mm CR Flex-Foam neoprene provides 100 percent waterproof protection, has excellent heat-retention properties and adjusts to the foot's contours to resist chafing. Soft fleece lining enhances comfort, provides warmth and is durable for long, cold treks. Tough Spandura and an extended rubber shaft round out the cold-weather features of these waterproof winter boots. www.muckbootcompany.com



DRYSHOD NOSHO

Designed for late-season hunting, the 100 percent waterproof Dryshod Nosho hunting boot (\$189.95) provides all-day comfort, support and stability in challenging weather conditions. It features Dryshod's DS1 molded outsole with outer and inner grip, six layers of protection plus EVA cold-blocking midsole, 5.5mm bootie, 2.5mm Densoprene XD foam (extreme density), 2mm air mesh and 2mm warm fleece lining. This all adds up to 11mm of insulating warmth and protection. Nosho boots also have a removable molded EVA sock liner and double Achilles' heel and instep reinforcement for comfort and protection. www.dryshodwest.com



KENETREK MOUNTAIN EXTREME BOOTS

Kenetrek Mountain Extreme boots (\$465-\$505) give hardcore hunters the wherewithal to pursue their favorite high altitude big game species no matter what Ma Nature throws at them. They feature 10-inch tall 2.8mm thick premium full-grain leather uppers with one-piece vamp construction with no seams down the tongue for abrasion resistance and waterproofing. Reinforced double and triple stitching make them durable and they have 7mm nylon midsoles for extra support when packing heavy loads. Other features include a reinforced rubber sole guard for abrasion resistance, Windtex waterproof breathable flexible membrane and lightweight K-Talon outsoles for positive traction. Kenetrek Mountain Extreme boots are available in non-insulated and 400- and 1,000-gram insulated versions. www.kenetrek.com



GATOR WADERS CAMP BOOT

Gator Waders continues to expand its footwear collection with its all-purpose Camp boot (\$109/ Men's and Women's). Hanging out by the campfire, headed to or from the woods or running errands around town – the Camp boot is designed to be comfortable, dependable, tough and stylish. It features an interior neoprene lining for warmth and comfort, with a waterproof rubber outer layer to keep feet dry. Its scuff and slip resistant outsole and durable rubber reinforced heel and toe offer ultra-durability, while the grosgrain pull tab makes it easy to put on and take off. Gator Camp boots are available in men's sizes 8 through 14 and women's sizes 6 through 10 in Mossy Oak Bottomland and solid brown. www.gatorwaders.com



ZAMBERLAN USA POLAR HUNTER

Zamberlan USA has introduced an innovative late-season, cold-weather hunting boot for the Western big-game hunting market, leveraging state-of-the-art outsoles, alpine-inspired designs and leading closure and fit technologies. The Polar Hunter GTX RR BOA (\$600) is made for non-compromising performance in the most challenging conditions, drawing its looks from Zamberlan's Alpine Collection of extreme weather boots. Integrated Kevlar gaiters, Riri waterproof zippers, BOA fit technology and Vibram Arctic Grip outsoles are combined in an extremely warm, yet lightweight and comfortable boot that features a soft midsole and comfortable fit – a great choice for cold-weather hunting both on and off the mountain. www.zamberlanusa.com



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Share the Harvest, Hunters

Filling the freezer with wild game is why we hunt, and it's also the perfect introduction to hunting for those around us.

BY MARK OLIVA

Hunters who hunkered down through the COVID-19 quarantine might be tempted to look at their freezers full of butcher paper and shrink-wrapped wild game from last season and think this is exactly what we've prepared for.

It is. Except, it is not just for you. That frozen wild game is the perfect opportunity for every outdoorsman and woman to become hunting's best ambassador. While you're pulling out a pound of ground venison to make a pot of chili, consider taking out another and walking it over to a neighbor.

No Lockdown on Caring

In many parts of the country, senior citizens in particular are still nervous about getting out and going to the grocery store. Nothing is stopping hunters from walking over some of last fall's goose breast, a pheasant or two or maybe a venison roast to a friend and neighbor you know can't get out and might need some help. It's even better if that person happens to be someone who might have written off the value of hunting or been interested, but never quite found a good enough reason to literally pull the trigger. Heck, if allowed and as long as gatherings are less than 10, invite them over and cook them the meal. Backstraps are better when they're shared.

Hunters could be easily drawn into a hoarding mentality. It's gratifying at the end of the season to look over the freezer and see neatly wrapped and stacked packages of nature's bounty, marked by species, cut and date. Hunting has always been better when it is shared, both



during the hunt and later when we enjoy the harvest.

Breaking Barriers

Let's be honest. There are those we know, most likely right across the street from us, who cringe at the thought of actually pulling the trigger on a live animal. They have no issue with buying meat from the store, but the visceral work of finding, harvesting, cleaning and

butchering can be a big hurdle for some. This is a perfect opportunity to show nonhunters what we do and why we do it.

Our freezers are filled with clean and lean protein. They're also filled with potential invitations and tales to be told. One pound of ground venison isn't likely to turn Chuck from three houses down into the next Steve Rinella. Eva Shockey's job is probably safe from Karen

with the minivan next door nudging into her lane. This isn't about necessarily finding the next buddy to put in for sheep tags and climb mountains looking for a Boone and Crockett qualifier.

Wild Harvest Diplomacy

That pound of venison, though, could be just that little bit of extra food that eases the anxiety of being able to feed a family. It can also





show your neighbor why you get up before the sun's up. It might help them to better understand the time spent on the range, making sure shots are accurate. Sharing the harvest could help someone who may have a dim view of hunting understand that ethical hunting ensures wildlife resources are used responsibly and perpetuated for the next generation.

Sharing wild game could convince someone who has always been curious to take a walk to a dove field with you later in the year or bring the coffee thermos to the duck blind when migration turns the birds south again. When they ask, be ready with the resources to show them, like NSSF's *LetsGoHunting.org*, which is full of tips and recipes. Want to get them started just

cooking? Look to Steven Rinella's *MeatEater*, which goes beyond the old camp cream of mushroom recipes. He's got one up for Pheasant Pad Thai.

Hunters, this is our chance to stand out. It's our chance to stand up and show that while antlers and mounts are treasured memories, the reason we hunt is to sustain ourselves. Even if we spend the fall

season alone in a tree stand, the bounty and the reward of the hunt is bringing the harvest home to those we love.

Sometimes, especially during trying times, a friendly smile, a warm meal and genuine concern for our neighbors does more for our sport than donning the camouflage jacket to blend in. Hunters, stand up and stand out. **HR**

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BY GORDY KRAHN

HUNTING RETAILER NEW PRODUCTS



OUTDOOR EDGE DUCK DUO KNIFE COMBO

Outdoor Edge's Duck Duo knife combo – gut hook skinner and caping knife – is so named because of its unique duck-head-shaped handle. The gut hook skinner features a 3.7-inch drop-point blade and measures 7.2 inches overall, while the caping knife sports a compact 3.2-inch blade and measures 6.8 inches overall. The skinner's gut hook opens game without puncturing internal organs, and the smaller caping knife is perfect for detailed, intricate cuts such as caping out heads. Both knives have heat treated hand finished stainless steel blades with a Rockwell-C hardness rating of 57. The unique duck head design provides a locking grip in a variety of positions, and a rubberized TPR handle provides a non-slip hold, even when things get wet and messy. **MSRP: \$54.95** www.outdooredge.com

DSG KYLIE 4.0 3-IN-1 HUNTING JACKET AND DROP SEAT BIBS

DSG Outerwear has added the Kylie 4.0 3-in-1 hunting jacket and drop-seat bibs combo to its line of cold-weather hunting apparel to help female hunters gear up for all scenarios, from cold to cooler weather hunts to casual wear around camp. The set allows hunters to add or remove layers based on temperature needs. For maximum warmth, hunters can layer the included removable fleece liner under the outer shell. For slightly warmer days, they can sport just the outer shell or wear just the inner fleece as a stylish casual piece. The quiet brushed waterproof and windproof Kylie 4.0 outer shell has 100 grams of thin profile insulation for lightweight warmth and added insulation when paired with the included fleece liner. **MSRP: \$189.99/Each** www.dsgouterwear.com



BLASER R8 6.5 PRC ULTIMATE RIFLE

Blaser's R8 Ultimate modular rifle is now chambered in 6.5 PRC, delivering the high velocity and flatter trajectory that make it a favorite of long-range hunters. The straight-pull R8 bolt-action rifle offers hunters a vast number of configurations. Features include a wide array of stock options, recoil reduction system, adjustable comb, adjustable length of pull and numerous barrels and bolt heads to facilitate quick caliber conversions. The Blaser Saddle Mount System allows for easy and precise mounting of a riflescope by allowing the one-piece base of the mount to fit into notches machined into the top of the free-floating barrel. The barrel and saddle mount become one accurate unit, ensuring absolute repeatability once the scope has been zeroed. **MSRP: \$4,875-\$6,147** www.blaser-usa.com

WOOX LEGGENDA FOLDING KNIFE

The new Leggenda folding knife continues the tradition of Woot products by combining traditional craftsmanship and design with modern technology and needs. This one-of-a-kind folding knife blends carbon fiber, steel and American walnut into one great and innovative product. The high carbon D2 Mil-Spec steel offers unparalleled edge retention, and its folding mechanism is smooth and reliable due to the knife's IKBS thrust bearing pivot system. The walnut-carbon fiber handle adds strength while reducing the overall weight of the Leggenda knife. **MSRP: \$249/ Walnut); \$349/Carbon and walnut)** www.wooxstore.com



SIGHTMARK WRAITH 4K MAX 3-24X50MM DIGITAL RIFLESCOPE

Sightmark's Wraith 4K Max digital riflescope is a harmony of technology, power and precision. In low-light conditions it utilizes an enhanced ultra-high definition 4000x3000 digital CMOS sensor to detect nighttime objects up to 300 yards away. The Wraith 4K's sharp 1280x720 display resolution delivers crystal-clear imaging while 3-24X digital magnification gives users the versatility to adjust the range as needed. Its 850nm IR illuminator features 90 minutes of operating time on max, and its night vision mode and daytime color mode offer crisp, vibrant views. With a stout aluminum housing, the Wraith 4K features built-in UHD 4K video recording with audio, 10 reticle options and an IPX5 water-resistant rating. Its rechargeable, internal battery provides up to eight hours of power. **MSRP: \$999.96** www.sightmark.com

WORK SHARP MK.2 SHARPENER

Get professional sharpening results in just minutes with the MK.2 Knife and Tool sharpener from Work Sharp. It makes quick work of kitchen knives, pocketknives and hunting knives, and it also sharpens scissors and a wide range of common lawn and garden tools. Its all-new sharpening guide quickly adjusts from 20 to 25 degrees to make sharpening hunting knives faster and easier, while the new edge guide helps support the knife at the perfect angle, making it more precise and repeatable. The MK.2's new dual speed motor provides the right speed for low-speed knife sharpening and high-speed tool grinding. Its engineered flexible abrasive belts come in three grits to accomplish any sharpening task and are long lasting and cool cutting. **MSRP \$99.95** www.worksharptools.com



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Are Crossbows Killing Whitetail Hunting?

BY BOB ROBB

The crossbow controversy has been the talk of the archery industry for several years now. As crossbows became high tech and their use during archery-only seasons across America more common — today they're legal during archery-only seasons in 30 states, and only Oregon bans their use completely — the naysayers started in with the negative vibes. On top of the usual cynical comments — “A crossbow is not a real bow, it's more like a rifle;” “If you don't have to draw the bow back, you have a huge advantage;” “You can shoot a deer so much farther with a crossbow than a compound bow” and so on — there was the “success rates will grow so fast during the bow season that we'll kill too many deer” cry.

Technical and performance comparisons aside, is it true that the whitetail deer harvest has shot through the roof since the crossbow has become legal during archery-only seasons in so many states?

NDA Data

The National Deer Association published an article by Kip Adams in September 2020 that took a close look at actual harvest data. Adams focused on the 37 states east of the Rocky Mountains that are home to about 97 percent of the U.S. whitetail population. In these states, 30 permit crossbow use by all hunters during at least a portion of the whitetail season.

According to Adams, in 2002, the percentage of the total national whitetail harvest taken with archery equipment (bows and crossbows) was 15 percent, increasing to 21 percent by 2012. During the 2018-19 season, it increased to 23 percent. The question is, of the one-third total annual whitetail harvest taken by archery gear, what percentage of it was taken by crossbows?

This data is a bit hard to compile, as five of the 30 states in question do not separate crossbow vs. vertical bow harvest. However, in 11 (that's 44%) of the 25 states that do separate the harvest numbers, the crossbow harvest now exceeds the vertical bow harvest. Despite the fact that all states in the Southeast allow crossbows, vertical bow harvest still dominates there. It's a flip-flop in the Northeast, where 10 states allow crossbows, and crossbow harvest exceeds vertical bows in eight (80%). In the Midwest, nine states allow crossbows, but vertical bows still account for more deer taken in six of them (67%).

The Wisconsin Study

The Wisconsin DNR surveyed 19 states about their allowing crossbow use, who their crossbow hunters were, and what effects, if any, the addition of crossbow hunters had on their state's deer herds. Key points include:

- Most states that allow crossbow use allow it statewide for all of bow season.
- States that did not allow crossbow use for all bowhunters restricted their use because of concerns over crowding, overharvest or appropriate weapon classification.
- Opponents of crossbows have commonly been the states' organizations representing vertical bowhunting.
- No state interviewed that allowed crossbow use has shortened its season or restricted crossbow use from the original law.

• Crossbow use typically increased over the initial year, then leveled off in the future.

• Few states measure weapon-specific success rates. States that did showed higher success rates for crossbow users than vertical-bow users.

• Most states haven't determined if the addition of crossbows had any influence on their states' overall deer license sales.

• The addition of crossbows showed little impact on established seasons/traditions or hunters' willingness to bag deer.

• Crossbows did not cause any change in total deer harvest.

• The addition of crossbows did not have any measurable biological impact on the states' deer herds.

• In the states that measured deer wounding and/or hit rates, there was little difference between vertical-bow and crossbow users.

Adams' article noted that it's important that none of the 19 interviewed states that allow crossbows have shortened their seasons or restricted crossbow use from the original laws permitting their use. In fact, some have actually expanded the use of crossbows. Perhaps most important is the fact that crossbow hunting has not produced any measurable biological impacts on deer herds. In fact, Maryland and Indiana mentioned crossbow use had a positive impact, since it allowed hunters to control deer numbers in areas where gun hunting is restricted.

Two big criticisms of crossbow

use are they allow longer shots and have much higher hunter success rates. However, the survey found no significant difference in the reported maximum ranges for crossbow and compound bowhunters. On the other hand, Maryland, Missouri, Ohio and Wisconsin data shows crossbow hunters are more successful than vertical bow hunters, though the difference is less than 10% more successful in all cases. For example, in Ohio from 2012 to 2019, bow success rates averaged 21%, while crossbow success rates ranged from 19 to 28%; in Wisconsin from 2014 to 2018, bow success rates averaged 23%, while crossbow success rates ranged from 30 to 33%. Despite the higher success rates, crossbow use showed little impact on established seasons or hunters' willingness to shoot deer.

My take? I've been a hard-core compound bowhunter for 40 years, and I've done some crossbow hunting the past five seasons. One huge difference is the fact that a compound shooter must practice a lot, while accurate crossbow shooting takes much less practice. And having to draw the compound back vs. simply aiming a cocked crossbow is a huge advantage. That being said, I welcome crossbow hunters into the deer woods during archery-only seasons.

What's your take on crossbow use during archery-only seasons? Have crossbows become an important part of your business? Drop me a note at editor@grandviewoutdoors.com — I'd love to hear from you. **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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