

HUNTING

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RETAILER

January/February 2022 | Winter Special



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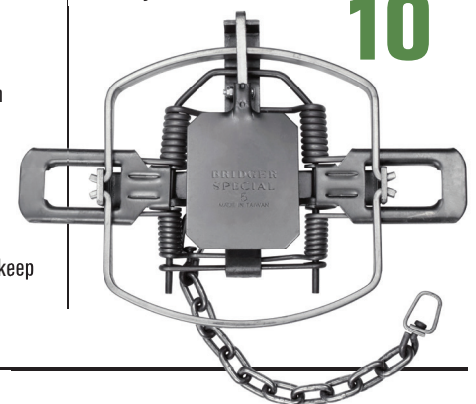
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HUNTING
 R E T A I L E R

HUNTING RETAILER® is published six times a year in January/February, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October, and November/December by COLE Publishing, Inc. Published and owned by COLE Publishing, Inc., 1720 Maple Lake Dam Rd., Three Lakes, WI 54562.

Canada; \$60 annually for all other U.S., Canada or Mexico subscribers; and \$150 for two years to all other foreign countries. To subscribe, visit www.huntingretailer.com/order/subscription or call 800-257-7222.

POSTMASTER

Send address changes to:
Hunting Retailer P.O. Box 220
Three Lakes, WI 54562

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Sure-Shot Game Calls Sold to Former MLB Player Jay Bruce

Following a very successful 14-year professional baseball career, Jay Bruce has purchased a full ownership stake in Sure-Shot Game Calls.

A three-time all-star and two-time Silver Slugger Award winner, Bruce is an accomplished baseball player and an experienced outdoorsman with a passion for waterfowl hunting.

As one of the oldest game call companies in the world, Sure-Shot has provided hunters of all experience levels top-of-the-line products for more than 60 years. According to the company's new owner, Sure-Shot Game Calls will continue its legacy of timeless and classic products and is

already developing new calls set to be released in 2022. Bruce says the company will also see an updated logo, website, apparel and headwear.

"Sure-Shot has been part of the fabric of the hunting community of southeast Texas for more than 60 years, and I'm really excited to become part of the brand's legacy," said Bruce. "My main focus is to maintain the elite craftsmanship of our products while introducing the brand to the next generation of hunters."

The company was founded by James "Cowboy" Fernandez and George Yentzen in Nederland, Texas, in the early 1940s. After many prototypes,

their first product, the 1950 Yentzen Caller, became the very first patented double-reed duck call introduced to the marketplace. In 1959, Cowboy Fernandez entered several duck calling competitions, and both he and the Yentzen Caller became world class champions. Charlie Holder purchased the company in 2011 and now passes ownership to Bruce. Today, Sure-Shot offers more than two dozen game calls for waterfowl, predators, deer and turkeys.

For more information, visit www.sureshotgamecalls.com.

Real Avid Introduces Pro Shop Upgrade Program

As a leader in DIY for guns, Real Avid's goal is to move expert gun modification, accessorizing, and maintenance from the gunsmith bench to the kitchen table with the company's ever-expanding line of firearm tools and supplies developed specifically for the do-it-yourself gun enthusiast.

Now, Real Avid is providing retailers of all sizes with the tools they need to boost sales and establish their stores as the go-to authority for gun owners looking to maintain, modify and built their own firearms thanks to its new Pro Shop Upgrade program.

The Pro Shop Upgrade program offers retail-ready merchandising options to meet any retail environment. These include branded aisle headers, must-see endcap presentations, and creative violators that invite customers to engage the products. Real Avid designs its packaging to provide maximum information on product application, use and benefits. This approach to on-product consumer education makes product selection easy on the consumer and leads to increased sales. It is an increasingly important approach to retail merchandising as new gun owners wade through unfamiliar territory and are often reluctant to seek assistance. By combining attention-grabbing displays with comprehensive product information, retailers can help custom-

ers more quickly make informed purchasing decisions.

The new Pro Shop Upgrade program, available to Real Avid dealers, is designed to help retailers simplify entry into the DIY arena for their walk-in customers by presenting the company's innovative products through attention-grabbing displays and logical organization. This allows veteran gun owners and, more importantly, the wave of new gun owners to confidently assess the tool and maintenance solutions they need, leading to increased sales not only of Real Avid products but also the multitude of aftermarket accessories and upgrade parts included in your on-shelf inventories.

Direct benefits of the Pro Shop Upgrade Program include easier firearm support for your customers, improved customer education, empowerment, increased accessory sales, saved time and maximized space, and more.

Dealers have several great choices of layouts, designs and even custom planograms. Included with the order will be merchandising signage, mounting hardware, inventory backer cards, installation instructions, and a detailed planogram. To inquire about upgrading your space with a Real Avid Pro Shop or to become a Real Avid Dealer, please contact your local independent Real Avid sales representative or email proshop@realavid.com.

O.F. Mossberg & Sons Chairman Passes

On November 6, Alan Mossberg, Chairman of O.F. Mossberg & Sons, Inc., passed away at his home in Tierra Verde, Florida, surrounded by close friends and family. Alan was 89 years old.

Grandson of O.F. Mossberg & Sons, Inc. founder, Oscar Mossberg, Alan started working for the Mossberg organization at a very young age. For the better part of the last 50 years, Alan became a major pillar of the global firearms industry by successfully leading Mossberg to grow

into one of the world's largest and most respected small arms manufacturers.

A staunch proponent of conservation and shooting sports throughout his career, Alan was heavily involved with organizations such as, Ducks Unlimited, National Rifle Association, National Shooting Sports Foundation, National Wild Turkey Federation, North American Hunting Club, Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers Institute, and the U.S. Olympic Shooting

Team. Under Alan's guidance, Mossberg has been (and continues to be) a substantial contributor to these and other organizations that promote the safe and healthy future of hunting and shooting sports.

Alan is survived by a large family, including his children, Iver Mossberg, Jonathan Mossberg, Gretchen (Mossberg) Highsmith and Linnea (Mossberg) Helalat. Iver Mossberg is currently O.F. Mossberg & Sons, Inc. CEO. **HR**



This month's cover brought to you by:



Do-All Outdoors is celebrating our 25th anniversary. Founded in 1997, Do-All Outdoors was the first to develop, patent, and introduce automatic trap throwers to the marketplace that are simple and affordable enough for individuals to own and operate. Since then, we have been dedicated to bringing the highest quality, most innovative and affordable products to the shooting, recreational, and hunting industries. Jurassic Rock and Dead Deer hunting accessories are both very important parts of our family of products.

Enhance your mineral site with Jurassic Rock, it is a year-round mineral supplement designed to support bigger deer all year. It is packed with prehistoric minerals to support size, strength, and health. We began with a 12-pound rock in 2017 and added both 6- and 30-pound bags of crushed in 2019. Last year we increased the size of our rock from 12-pounds to 15-pounds without any price increase!

This year, Jurassic Rock is bringing our tried-and-true mineral rock to a whole new level by adding our own special blend of Apple Spiced or Pumpkin Spiced attractant to our finely crushed rock. This year-round attractant and mineral supplement will give your wildlife the nutrients they need, while coming back for more. It is available in a 50-pound 5-gallon BUCKitLOAD and a 2.5-pound 1-quart reusable GROWLER jar. Using it is easy: Find your location, clear a 3-6-foot area, Dump the mineral onto area, then watch it work.

Dead Deer trophy mounting solutions gives you cost effective alternatives to show off your trophies in a simple and effective way that always looks great. From the classic Iron Buck and its eye-catching variations to the Iron Turkey, you will not be disappointed.

Do-All Outdoors has become a one-stop shop for all your hunting and shooting needs by offering Jurassic Rock, Dead Deer and a full line of traps and targeting systems all in one place. We have set the bar high and back up all our products with one of the best customer service departments in the industry.

With your continued support we look forward to achieving greater success and reaching new heights in our industry for many years to come. Check out our products at your local retailer, dealer, or distributor and for more info visit doall-outdoors.com or follow us on Facebook and Instagram.





Reshaping Your Workplace Culture

The keys to success are simple, but improvement requires real action.

BY KEN WYSOCKY

There's a lot of emphasis these days on building a great workplace culture. Unfortunately, doing so is a lot like following through on New Year's resolutions: Much easier said than done.

But it's not mission impossible, either. And the rewards — ranging from more engaged employees and reduced turnover to increased innovation and improved customer satisfaction — certainly make it a goal worth pursuing, says Heidi Lynne, the owner of Heidi Lynne Consulting in Philadelphia.

Of course, the first step toward improving anything requires admitting there's a problem. And while workplace culture can sometimes feel like a rather nebulous concept that's difficult to quantify, it's nonetheless fairly easy to deter-

mine if an organization's culture is healthy.

"First and foremost, you want to look at turnover — and not just the company as a whole," Lynne says. "You need to break it down by department and if there's an issue, determine what the root of the problem is."

The factors that contribute to high turnover typically are the very same indicators of a poor workplace culture. In short, companies aren't going to win any prizes for workplace culture if they do a poor job of communicating with employees, are driven by gossip and cliques, neglect developmental training, don't provide defined career paths, and fail to recognize and celebrate employee milestones and accomplishments.

"To me, a good workplace culture is where everyone comes together and feels included, welcome, comfortable and creative," Lynne says. "It's a place where everyone collaborates and feels like they're part of a family — a safe environment where everyone can be their respective selves."

"And it's more important today than ever before, especially in terms of being diverse and inclusive. Those things weren't always prioritized before. Everyone must feel included, regardless of their gender and background."

Listen to Employees

A good place to start reshaping a workplace culture is an employee survey, although Lynne says she has a love-hate relationship with



them because too many companies only ask generic questions — and then don't act on the results.

"But if you create a survey that asked targeted, specific questions and you plan to use the feedback to improve the overall culture, I'm totally on board with that," she says.

The questions that organizations should ask can vary greatly. But some generic examples could include asking what employees would do to improve the onboarding process, how well their managers provide feedback and what three things could be done to improve the organizational culture, Lynne suggests.

Deciding what needs to be changed takes time and effort. Too often, a chief executive officer asks Lynne what kind of programs can be implemented before they even give employees a chance to weigh in, she says.

"You need to find out what they want," Lynne says. "Employees want to be heard and be valued. You need to take time to ask what's important to them and create a plan around their feedback."

While this might seem obvious, it's not always the case. That's largely because generations of senior managers have built and preserved hierarchal corporate cultures based on control over employees and information. And at the same time, employees have resignedly accepted this arrangement.

"But there's a new generation of millennials that are speaking up and speaking out, that have needs and demands and refuse to only accept what senior leadership offers," Lynne says. "Senior leaders are starting to realize that employees are assets, that it's not about maintaining a hierarchy but establishing a partnership."

Hire the Right People

One of the simplest ways to build a great culture is to hire employees who mesh well with the company's values. Of course, this presumes an organization has a set of core values and not only communicates and emphasizes them regularly to employees, but has managers and senior leadership who uphold them daily, she says.

"You can't just have them only as decoration," Lynne says. "You have to hire by them, discipline by them and fire by them."

Hiring the right people requires job interviews that delve deeper into candidates' personalities and suss out the quality of their soft skills, as opposed to just the typical behavioral what-would-you-do-if-you-encountered-this-situation type questions. To do this, Lynne prefers asking candidates their personal interests, how their friends would describe them — even how their enemies would describe them.

"You should create an informal environment and ease into things — find some common ground and determine

their personalities," she says. "Then if you see gaps between their personalities and the organization's core values, you can ask more targeted questions, like how would they provide feedback or how they'd react to feedback."

Organizations also need to be wary of how job descriptions are written, as well as scrutinize the overall language used that can create an unwelcoming culture. For example, Lynne says managers often use gender-coded language that makes people feel excluded, especially women.



Communication Is Key

Sometimes organizations feel compelled to provide employees with "cool" perks — think foosball or ping-pong tables, video games and craft beer on tap — to improve their culture. That's all well and good, but companies that do so run the risk of putting style ahead of substance, Lynne says.

"I've seen companies mimic their competitors or Google by offering fun perks, but that's not how it works," she says. "If a company gets crummy Glassdoor reviews but offers good perks, what has it gained? It has to go deeper than that."

In the end, what really matters is great communications with employees and leadership that not only talks the talk but walks the walk. For example, it helps immensely if a company that says it values feedback and wants a feedback-driven culture also has a chief executive officer that regularly walks around and visits with employees instead of remaining secluded in an office, Lynne says.

"Or maybe a CEO that gets a lot of pushback about lack of transparency starts holding town hall events," she adds. Of course, the corollary to that is that CEOs then have to actively act on the feedback they receive — not treat it like yet another half-hearted New Year's resolution. **HR**

↑ Building a great culture starts with hiring the right people in the first place. If employees don't share the company's values, developing a healthy, cohesive culture will be an uphill battle.



Seed Blends

Food plots continue to be popular among hunters. Here's what you need to know to cash in.



BY MARK CHESNUT

Deer hunters like to use a variety of methods to pull more deer onto their hunting lands and keep them there during the season. One of the most effective — and laborious, I might add — is planting food plots of a variety of different plants that deer can't resist.

As a little "Food Plot 101" type info, food plot planting for deer and other wildlife falls into two main categories: warm-season and cool-season. Warm-season plantings are typically planted in spring and grow throughout the summer and into fall. They include forages like soybeans, corn, sorghum, cowpeas and other agricultural type crops. Interestingly, some clovers, though often considered cool-season forages, are very versatile and can be used for either spring or fall planting. Not only does high-protein clover attract deer, but it also gives them excellent nourishment and even helps bucks grow bigger antlers.

Cool-season forages are planted in the fall or early spring, and some grow throughout the year. They include forage plants like wheat, rye, oats, clovers and brassicas. Deer love brassicas, which are easy to establish,

grow quickly and are suited for growing in a wide variety of climates and soil types. Most cool-season forages are perennials, meaning they will come back again the following year after planting, but some are not.

Creating a good food plot is a multi-step process. First, hunters must locate a spot on their hunting property that is the appropriate size and in a desirable location to provide deer with a food attractant. To prepare the area, hunters must first mow, spray, or mow and spray the area to clear it of its current vegetation. Next, the ground must be broken up to allow for good seed-to-soil contact. At this time, a soil sample should be taken so any necessary fertilizers can be added. Next, an adequate supply of seed must be purchased, then spread in the correct manner and amount. Finally, with all that done, it's time to pray for rain.

Let's take a look at three high-quality seed blends for hunters looking to plant productive food plots — and for retailers to carry in their inventory to sell to those hunters. For this column, we'll look at cool-season mixes that are typically planted in fall and hunted over during the fall and winter.



MOSSY OAK BIOLOGIC GREEN PATCH PLUS

Biologic has been offering seed blends for many years, and hunters throughout the nation have benefited from the plots made with their top-quality seed blends. Green Patch Plus is one of the company's more popular mixes and grows well from northern Michigan to deep south Texas.

Green Patch Plus is a fall plot planting that combines the proven attractiveness of transitional grains with the well-known nutrition and deer-attracting ability of genuine New Zealand brassicas and clovers. As the company puts it, "The result is an economical forage blend that establishes quickly and provides an irresistible food plot from planting through the end of hunting season." While it is a good choice for small foot plots, it also delivers great performance in larger plots.

Biologic recommends planting Green Patch Plus by spreading the seed on a well-prepared seedbed at a rate of 40 pounds per acre. It further recommends using a cultipacker to cover the seed after spreading. Broadcasting the seed on a well-prepared seedbed is also known to produce an excellent, deer-attracting crop – especially if spread just before a rain. One important item to note: Disking is not recommended for covering the seed, as that is likely to bury the seed too deep for germination.

Green Patch Plus is available in a 10-pound bag that will plant .25 acres, a 20-pound bag that will plant .5 acres and a 40-pound bag that is enough to plant 1 acre. Since most hunters are familiar with the Mossy Oak and Biologic brands, this seed should do well on the shelf throughout summer and early fall.



EVOLVED HARVEST MEGAPLOT HUNTER SERIES

From a company that has been producing high-quality seed for wildlife planting for years, Evolved Harvest Megaplot Hunter Series is an excellent grain-based mix of triticale forage grain, oats, forage turnips and annual forage clovers. Interestingly, it can be planted in the spring or fall in most areas to grow palatable, high-protein forage all season.

Evolved Habitats puts science behind dozens of powerful products that effectively attract, pattern and hold wildlife. As the company puts it, "Evolved harvest delivers high-quality, high-volume food plots that improve wildlife nutrition. Our forage variety food plots don't go bare even after intense feeding pressure: They're eaten, then regrow to be eaten again."

Filled with vital protein and minerals, the highly palatable food plots from Megaplot Hunter Series include a wide variety of highly desirable forage to attract and hold deer and other game. As a bonus, it will keep growing year-round.

The recommended planting rate for Megaplot Hunter Series is 40 pounds per acre, planted in tilled soil with a PH range of 6.0 to 7.5 at a depth less than .25 inches. It comes in a 20-pound bag, which is enough to adequately plant .5 acres. Recommended fertilizer is 120 pounds of 13-13-13 per acre.

This food plot blend is effective throughout most of the country. This food plot blend carries a 4.5 out of 5 rating from those who purchased it at Walmart, showing a lot of satisfaction among those customers who purchased and planted it.

PENNINGTON RACKMASTER DELUXE FALL DEER MIX

Pennington has been at the seed game for many years, starting in 1945 as a small seed store on Main Street in Madison, Georgia. More recently, the company has become well known for its grass seed and its wide selection of wild bird seed, but it also produces a variety of top-quality food plot blends.

Rackmaster Deluxe is a combination of winter annual grasses, legumes and brassica species that attract deer and provide the carbohydrates needed to help the deer herd build up stored fat to maintain good body condition through the rut and winter stress period. Its ingredients include wheat, oats, rye, Austrian winter peas, crimson clover and brassica – all suppliers of high protein, which deer need during the fall and winter seasons.

Recommended plant rate is 100 pounds per acre, planted between .25 and .5 inches deep. It comes in a 50-pound bag, which is enough to plant half an acre. Best planting times are Aug. 15 through Oct. 1 in the North, Sept. 15 through Nov. 30 in the South, and Sept. 1 through Oct. 15 in the upper South. This is a winning blend from a company that many customers recognize and admire. **HR**





12 Great Products to Snare Trapping Sales

Trapping is having a bit of a resurgence in popularity, thanks to out-of-control predator populations. What will local trappers be shopping for?

BY KEVIN REESE

Fred Bear once quipped, “The history of the bow and arrow is the history of mankind.” He never knew how right he was. Just 18 years after our hunting world’s light was diminished by his passing, archaeologists discovered arrowheads in northeastern South Africa’s Sibudu Caves. Scientists believe the heads to be over 60,000 years old — dating back to the Paleolithic era. That said, and as close as Bear might have been, he wasn’t entirely accurate. Trapping might be a tad older than hunting; after all, before the stick and string, there were spears and pitfall traps. Even before weapons, creatures of the two-legged kind needed hides from their four-legged neighbors.

Trapping continues to enjoy widespread popularity today, especially in rural or altogether off-the-grid locales. And,

thanks to television, modern Americans in every clime and place are blessed with some level of exposure to trapping’s benefits for those living completely self-sufficient lives. In terms of conservation, trapping is a necessary tool. Whether outdoor enthusiasts are trapping furbearing predators or invasive species like feral hogs and nutria, agencies in various areas offer bounties on pelts, tails, etc. In some cases around the nation, we find ourselves in an outright war, and trapping definitely helps. No matter what draws, or forces, folks to trap, more people are getting in the game. This means more sales for retailers willing to clear a little shelf space and stock up. That said, here are 12 great products sure to snare trapping gear sales.





REDNECK CONVENT COYOTE TRAPPING STARTER KIT

Perhaps the best way to snare new trappers is with a starter kit. The Redneck Convent Coyote Trapping Starter Kit fills this bill nicely. While its name suggests coyotes, this starter kit is perfectly suited for other predators, too, including foxes, bobcats and a variety of other like-sized animals found coast to coast. The Redneck Convent Coyote Trapping Starter Kit includes six off-set jaw traps, 12 cable stakes, 12 J-hooks, 24 pan covers, a dirt sifter, a narrow-blade trowel, T-top driver, two-pound trap line hammer, a pint of bait, an 8-ounce bottle of red fox urine and a couple of one-ounce lures. www.redneckconvent.com



REDNECK CONVENT VERSATILE SNARE WIRES

Today's snare wires are certainly a nod to one of trapping's early, primitive techniques. Even better for cost-conscious trappers, snares are exceptionally affordable while advances in manufacturing and materials make wires ultra-reliable and ridiculously strong. All Redneck Convent Versatile Snare Wires are constructed of 3/32-inch cable with 9-gauge HD end swivels, polyethylene collars and 12-inch loop limits with optional deer stops to protect against deer trapping. Packs include 12 snare wires, perfect for a diverse array of varmints and prey, from raccoons to coyotes, and take up a negligible amount of shelf space. Placed properly and strategically, snare wires have proven to be incredibly effective, and in the cheaper-by-the-dozen pack, your customers leave with plenty of traps to set.



MINNESOTA CHAIN STAKES

Captain Obvious here... trapping would be pointless if you can't keep traps and trapped animals from disappearing. Chain stakes are as necessary as the traps they hold down, and Minnesota Trapping Products delivers them in batches of 12. Minnesota Trapping Products' chain stakes are composed of Fox Hollow Super Stakes, 16-inch No. 2 linked chain and closed-loop hooks. Chain stakes are easy for your customers to use – they simply attach the trap to the chain with a No.6 J-hook and swivel and they will never lose another trap. www.minntrapprod.com



MINNESOTA SOD BUSTER HAMMER

At four pounds, it won't be the lightest tool in your trapper's bag, but behind traps and anchors, it just might be the most important. The Minnesota Sod Buster Hammer is truly a multi-tool. While the handle is constructed of fiberglass and features a non-slip grip, the head is designed for a dual trapping role. One end boasts a three-pound hammer, ideal for driving stakes, and the other end, a chisel, perfect for digging out trap beds. Just as any outdoorsman appreciates having a good knife, the Sod Buster Hammer is a must-have for all of your trapping customers.



WILDLIFE RESEARCH CENTER COYOTE URINE

Sure, setting traps on trails and in front of dens is one way to catch critters, but some, like coyotes and other predators, are a bit less predictable. If your customers are after furbearing predators, a surefire way to help them up their odds is urine. From personal experience, I can attest that Wildlife Research Center's Coyote Urine is quite effective in luring song dogs into trap areas by playing to their competitive nature. Wildlife Research Center Coyote Urine's strong odor also makes a great masking scent. www.wildlife.com





DUKE #155 BT BODY TRAP

Unlike jaw traps, body traps are designed to kill target critters. Most often these traps are used for smaller waterway animals like otters and minks; however, they can be used for raccoons and opossums, too. As its name implies, a body trap works by closing on and compressing an animal's body cavity, often the neck and chest area. Among body-gripping traps, the Duke #155 BT Body Trap's size, great for a variety of animals, makes it a perfect choice for most sets. The #155 BT's jaw spread of 5 inches is compatible with fishers, weasels, minks, muskrats, martens, groundhogs, raccoons and other similarly-sized critters. As a side note here for your beaver-trapping customers, Duke #280 and #330 BT body traps are endorsed by many DNR agencies as "effective and humane traps for beaver population control." www.duketrap.com



BRIDGER #5 COILSPRING OFFSET LAMINATED TRAP

Bridger traps rank among the industry's most popular, and in that vein, coil-spring, offset jaw models reign supreme. Narrowing down offset jaw traps, the Bridger #5 Laminated is a top seller. The Bridger #5 Coilspring Offset Jaw Trap is great for catching a variety of animals, small to large, including otters, beavers, coyotes, wolves and cougars. Bridger #5 traps boast an inside jaw spread of 7 1/2 inches, top-to-bottom spread of 7 11/16 inches, outside jaw spread of 7 3/8 inches and a pan dimension of 3 x 3 3/4 inches. For a more reliable yet more humane trap hold, the Bridger #5 includes laminated jaws that increase surface-area jaw contact with the animal while providing a straight, rather than toothed, jaw edge. The trap also includes 8 1/2 inches of No. 5 chain. Overall length with swivels is 12 inches, and the trap weighs 3.7 pounds. www.bridgetraps.com



DUKE BODY TRAP SET TOOL

While body traps are popular trapping tools, setting larger traps isn't as much fun. Traps like Duke's #220 or #330 BT models are set with quite a bit of tension, so a little help is always appreciated. The Duke Body Trap Set Tool is the perfect solution for safer, easier, leveraged compression of heavy springs, and it is a must-have in any body-gripping trapper's bag.



LEGGETT'S DELUXE TRAPPING BAG

When it comes to increased sales, accessorizing is an important strategy. Fortunately, you get a little help closing those sales from trappers who have an aversion to lugging everything out to their trap lines in hands and arms and over shoulders – backpacks work, too, but are not necessarily ideal to tote heavier, oddly-shaped traps and tools with sharp or jagged edges. These issues were the premise behind the Leggett's Deluxe Trapper's Bag design. Leggett's Deluxe Trapper's Bag is ready to handle the rough stuff, with 1,000 denier nylon and wood-bottom insert. For organization, this trapper's bag includes a roomy main compartment, side-panel pouch, two end pouches and carrying handles for easy carry. www.trapleggetts.com



DUKE DP COON TRAP

Just like laminate edges of jaw traps, some trapping systems are designed to mitigate injury to captured animals or to animals we do not intend to catch – case in point, the Duke DP Coon Trap. True to DP, this coon trap is dog-proof but can be quite a nightmare for little masked bandits. The DP Coon Trap is safe to set without tools, and it's easy to anchor at a 45-degree angle using the chain and included straight-spade stake. It features a sensitive pull-type trigger. **HR**





CRAZY ABOUT OUTDOORS COVER SCENT GEL

Beat the nose that knows with a cover scent that works. Crazy About Outdoors was founded in Texas with a focus on “relentless focus on innovation and attention to quality merchandise.” The company says it is “dedicated to providing extensive hunting equipment and apparel to the ever-growing market, unmatched in terms of quality and exclusiveness.” Its brand-new, 100% natural cover scent gel is designed to last longer and help disguise human odor. Apply it to the ground around you and your traps and rest assured it has no chemical additives. It’s made in the USA and comes in cedar, oak, pine, dirt and spruce scents. Try the dirt scent for trappers and the other scents for hunters who visit your store looking for cover scents in deer season. The gel comes in 2-ounce bottles and evaporates in 24 to 48 hours. crazyaboutoutdoors.com



CAVEN'S MOONSHINE RACCOON CALL AND FOOD TRAPPING LURE

Getting a raccoon's attention isn't hard, as he'll eat or investigate just about anything – but holding that attention until he's in your trap is where you find out what a lure is really made of. Getting a coon to go those final few inches into your trap is where a lure earns its money, and in that regard, Caven's Moonshine Raccoon Call and Food Trapping Lure might be worth every penny. It's composed of a carefully controlled blend of eight raccoon-attracting ingredients that are put together in just the right proportions in a long-lasting, waterproof base. You can take coon on your basic one-ingredient lures, but to take the most coons at any given time, you need to offer them a variety. If you're struggling with sealing the deal on raccoons, Moonshine can help. It gives them everything they want to put them where you want. **HR**

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WORKING WITH THE PRESS

The media can be your friend or a source of frustration.

BY MICHAEL D. FAW

While many firearms retailers hold most media and news outlets in disdain these days because of their heavily slanted views against firearms and glaringly jaded reports on our industry, it can be rewarding for your business to work with local media. A working relationship with your local media outlets (newspapers, TV, cable channels, radio, regional magazines and others) can be a valuable resource in calling attention to the services you offer your members, community and region. You should start building your media networks now.

First, remember that building a working relationship takes time, and you will need to make an effort. To develop the trust and bridge the network, invite media members to cover the major public events your range or shop may host. Don't extend an invite because of a red-hot sale, but do invite media to events that put you in front as a community resource, such as providing personal protection classes for women, family focused events or basic firearm safety classes for kids. Hosting a hunter education course or similar programs could also warrant coverage.



↑ Aiding media members who are having a first-time shooting experience can go a long way in making you a sought-after resource and firearms expert.



There are also the special occasions that make great stories and pull media to your door, such as couples coming for Valentine's or date night specials. Be creative in your angle for the special events and make a pitch to media accordingly.

Media could also be invited to your range or store for a basic familiarity tour. Be certain to invite them also when having an open house for your neighbors or customers — or if you host a community sight-in day before hunting season opens. This further establishes that you are part of the community and a valuable resource.

Of course, there are other stories to be told that promote the business angle, such as additions of new ranges, a move to a new state-of-the-art facility, and the grand re-opening or offering a new line of high-demand firearms or customer services, such as cleaning or appraisals. Becoming the state's first dealer with a unique firearm sales



display could also be news. In the event that civic groups such as Boy Scouts come to your range or shop to earn merit badges or do a fundraiser, remember to invite the media for special coverage.

Believe it or not, most local media outlets from radio and TV to newspapers are looking for something to write about. You can find these openings and use them to your advantage.

It's important to note the gray area some news outlets push. Like you, hometown newspapers and local magazines and radios survive by sell-



ing advertisements. If you are already advertising there, you have an opening. If your big event needs attention, consider advertising, but also ask about any coverage options.

Is It a Story?

Stories have many levels that can make them of interest to media channels and bring media to your business, so plan accordingly. Generally, you will need to give at least a 30-day notice before an event. Key information, such as having the largest or oldest range or most club members in the state, should also be mentioned. You don't want to be the center of attention only when there's bad news about guns in the mass media — you want to project a positive image and let the media help move this message when business is calm. Work to develop that network with local media that gives you the positive image.

Your pitch to media should have a strong central message, something a wide base of viewers, listeners or readers would like to hear or read about. Thus, some events could go in the sports section of a paper or be reported in the business part of a nightly news broadcast. There are also community pages and bulletin boards, and each may have a different editor or writer covering that segment.

Prepare to Interview

Before any media member arrives on your doorstep for an interview or to cover an event, take a moment and write down three key points that

↑ Media members who have a positive experience at your range or shop are more likely to turn in a positive story — and remember the experience.

you wish to make during the visit. Consider answering the basic reporter questions: who, what, when, where and why. Think also about possible questions from a media member and what your answers will be. Remember to speak clearly, take your time in responding to questions, and be very clear and accurate when using numbers and statistics. It's important to remember there are sometimes folks who want to fact-check those numbers, so mention numbers and stats infrequently.

If a media member simply calls or emails you for information or a quote, take your time and develop a positive statement. It's OK to take a phone number and call the person back with an answer. Remember, however, that media members and their outlets often work on tight deadlines. When you do give a quote or provide information, there is very little chance you can preview a story or article and make corrections or additions, so plan ahead. Also, be prepared for the tone of any interview to suddenly change, and then you could be led to answer questions that are not related to your business or interests, such as questions about school shootings or mass murders. It's best to completely avoid those topics. Don't provide a "no comment" statement, but steer the conversation back to points you want to cover. If you



sponsor a youth shooting team or host tournaments such as the NRA's Youth Hunter Education Challenge, point those out as positive youth events. Mention any work or sponsorship of youth groups also.

It's key to remember that nothing is "off the record" with media, and you could be taped — without your knowledge — from the moment the media person or crew arrives. Even if they show up at your business without prior plans or requests, be positive, stay calm, and show courtesy, since you and your staff are now representing all of the shooting sports community. Put your best foot forward.

When speaking with media and giving interviews, avoid the common "uhs" and "ahs" to sound more professional. Remember, a press visit is your chance to get your range or shop's story told and to do positive outreach in your community and region. Avoid becoming defensive or engaging in an argument, and don't expand on answers to tricky questions when a simple yes or no makes the point. In all media channels, remember that someone watching or reading could become your next star customer, so speak with serving those customers in mind.

If a reporter seems intently focused on a negative slant about firearms and asks negative, narrowly focused questions, work to overcome that negative slant and speak about the positive aspects of firearms and shooting. Comments

about hours of wholesome recreation, personal skill building, family bonding and a healthy lifestyle when hunting (for example, America needs more exercise and healthy/organic eating habits, according to doctors, and hunting provides those) drive positive messages. The conservation message and how hunting license sales help wildlife is also a great story to deliver. Most conservation programs are supported through excise taxes on firearms and ammunition, and the products on your store's shelves serve the public's interest when a purchase is made. Knowing what to say is often a result of being prepared.

Being prepared can make the media's job easier and helps you build that network and become a resource they return to use. Also, pick an area of your shop or range that makes a good impression to hold the interview. Avoid cluttered backgrounds or the range where constant loud noise



↑ When being interviewed, speak clearly and remember to not say anything you would not say in church.

Wow 'Em With Words

In the excitement of an unexpected media visit, take a deep breath, relax and don't be rushed into answers. Take your time, think carefully and speak intelligently. As a rule, don't say anything you would not utter in a local church. If you don't know details about a local case or about local ordinances and laws, simply state that you do not know but will find the answer and get back to them. Always avoid comments on lawsuits and shootings.

If asked about machine guns, "assault rifles" and the like, use your expert knowledge to accurately inform the public about firearms. Also, use the correct words when talking about firearms (not "weapons"). Help the media get their terminology correct.

In addition to contacting media about story ideas and to cover events, you can also invite media members to the range to shoot and learn about firearms. Some may enjoy the experience, you will help increase their firearms knowledge so they can report accurately, and some may become great customers.

Media outreach and the resulting coverage are often what you make them — and the time and effort you invest in these can pay great dividends. **HR**

↑ It's important to assist any invited media in safely shooting a firearm so they have, and can report about, a positive experience.

will ruin the opportunity.

If you have a gun club, consider establishing a public relations committee. This increases the chance that someone knows a media member and can begin the effort to work with that media member. To be more professional, and again to help the media member tell a positive story, you could also prepare a fact sheet about your range, services, outreach programs, classes offered, success stories, etc. Consider mailing such a list to media members you would like to work with and extend an invitation. Media members should also receive newsletters you send to clients and customers, so they stay informed.



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How to Help New Hires Get Up to Speed

Instead of dousing new employees' excitement with ineffective onboarding, use data-driven techniques that boost retention rates.

BY KEN WYSOCKY

Have you ever started to read a much-hyped book with great enthusiasm and anticipation, only to stop after a few chapters because it just wasn't compelling enough to keep going?

At many companies, inadequate and mind-numbing onboarding programs are the equivalent of that dull book, leaving new hires dispirited and wondering why they should stick with their new employer.

The cure? A data-driven onboarding program that sustains — not stifles — new hires' enthusiasm. That, in turn, reduces new employee turnover and boosts their productivity. It also im-

proves your organization's brand, which makes it easier to recruit top talent, says Dr. John Sullivan, a professor of management at San Francisco State University in San Francisco as well as an author, speaker and business consultant.

"Most onboarding programs are not well designed because they're not data-driven," says Sullivan, who wrote *The Onboarding & Orientation Toolkit: Tools That Get New Employees and Transfers Productive Faster*. As a consultant, he's also helped dozens of companies develop effective onboarding programs.

"They just do things that people like or that they remember they did during their own orienta-

tions, but they aren't necessarily effective," he says. "So people come in excited about their new job, and what they get is death-by-form — read this manual, fill out this form. By the end of that first day, all their excitement is gone."

Keeping new hires enthused and engaged is no small matter. Studies show that about one-third of new employees quit their jobs within the first six months of employment. And considering the expense of high employee turnover, coupled with a shrinking labor pool as overall employment rises and a continuing wave of Baby Boomer retirements, it's easy to determine that effective onboarding is more important than ever.

Photos: Bill Konway



Moreover, good word-of-mouth reviews of a company can help immeasurably in future recruiting efforts.

“When we start a new job, we’re invariably asked what it’s like,” Sullivan says. “So if you treat people right, it helps your brand image and probably gets you more recruits. It’s a longer-term benefit of strategic onboarding, as opposed to tactical things, such as making sure employees read an employee handbook.”

Poor onboarding raises other risks. It puts new hires in a position to unknowingly damage customer relations or raise the ire of colleagues who believe they’re carrying too much of the load when new hires don’t get up to speed fast enough.

Productivity Is the Goal

The main priority of any onboarding program is simple: Put employees in a position to maximize their production as quickly as possible.

“If you treat people right, it helps your brand image and probably gets you more recruits.”

scheduling regular feedback meetings with their manager; clearly spelling out goals and expectations; providing them with answers to frequently asked questions, developed by surveying previous new hires; and assigning new employees a “peer buddy,” someone who’s relatively new to the company and that new hires would feel comfortable asking the proverbial “stupid” questions, like the location of bathrooms.

“You don’t want employees to focus for six months on apples, only to find out that oranges were more important,” Sullivan says.

In addition, a new hire’s supervisor should be

ees become more productive faster and use the findings to establish onboarding protocols. Also, ask new hires what worked best during onboarding — and what didn’t work, too.

“The key questions to ask are why they could produce earlier and why they couldn’t produce earlier,” Sullivan says. “It’s critical to ask managers if they see things that helped get someone up to speed faster. Good data comes from real people. If you hire a pitcher and figure he’ll lose games for the first nine months, that’s not good. But if I told you that the pitcher could start winning in one month, you’d listen to find out why, right?”

Good onboarding programs don’t have to be expensive, either. And even if they are, Sullivan points out that it’s even more expensive not to have a good onboarding program.

Extreme onboarding — epitomized by high-tech companies like Google — is trendy these days. From weeklong scavenger hunts aimed at networking and learning company culture to participating in silly skits and contests or playing specially developed onboarding video games, industry leaders are making the process more of a celebration than a boring administrative task. Sullivan is a big fan of Google’s process, which reportedly gets employees up to speed 25% faster. Those who think that what Google does can’t apply to industries like independently owned retail do so at their own peril, Sullivan says.

“Google is one of the most valuable companies in the world, so I would copy them even if I were a janitor,” he says. “If you want to perform like the best, you have to act like the best. We’ve used the Google onboarding model for 7-Eleven stores. I recommend the Google approach because any manager can do it. Why not follow Google’s lead? They’re really smart and have the (onboarding) data to back up what they do.”

The bottom line is that ill-conceived onboarding can be as dull as going to homeroom every day in high school. “No one looks forward to that,” Sullivan says.

Instead, make onboarding a memorable event. You might not hold a strategic, weeklong scavenger hunt, for example. But you could do something as simple as taking new employees out for a beer. Then ask probing questions to find out if they’re producing the desired results. As Sullivan says, “Whatever the data says, do it.” **HR**



“Learning the rules is important, too,” Sullivan says. “But if you hired Tiger Woods to join your golf team, the first thing you’d want him to do is play, not hold off for a few days and attend meetings.”

“Most people are too stressed and too nervous to remember much of what they’re told during those first few days anyway, and much of it has no value,” he continues. “So, it’s very important to first figure out what they really need to know.”

The second most important goal is employee retention. That can be achieved by doing things such as holding “get-to-know-you” events that hasten the networking process; showing them possible career paths within the company;

present on the first day and consistently offer them attention, encouragement and training. “The manager should own the onboarding process,” Sullivan says.

Onboarding is a long-term process as opposed to orientation, which might last a day or so. A good onboarding program will last for months. That’s not to say it should be nonstop: After the first week or so, perhaps three to five touch-base hours a week will suffice.

Make It Data-Driven

In the end, onboarding programs should be systematically evaluated by examining data. For example, quiz managers about why certain employ-



Is the .410 a Viable Turkey-Hunting Shotgun?





Vast improvements in shotgun design and ammunition have made measurable performance differences. Does a .410 make sense for turkey hunters?

BY BOB ROBB

The wild turkey is a tough critter. As in all hunting, the goal is to make a quick, clean kill, and when hunting a hard-headed gobbler with a shotgun, that means getting maximum pellets into the head/neck area delivered with enough kinetic energy to penetrate the skull and/or break the neck.

I first started turkey hunting in the early 1970s, when hunting loads contained only chilled or slightly-hardened lead shot and there was no such thing as a screw-in choke tube. Turkey-specific shotshells were an anomaly, and most gobbler getters turned to either 2¾- or 3-inch 12-gauge waterfowl loads filled with No. 4, No. 5 or maybe No. 6 shot sent down-range through a full choke. No turkey guns back then had an optic sight, and only a few slug guns had more than a front bead sight. The thought of using a 20-gauge shotgun was considered foolishness, and few even considered a smaller-gauge shotgun. A 40-yard shot was stretching it back then.

Today, of course, the specialized turkey gun has become an industry unto itself. Designs that allow the gun to be aimed more like a rifle than a shotgun, fiber-optic open sights, the ability to add an optic sight, and interchangeable choke tubes designed specifically for today's incredible turkey shotshells have made yesterday's "way out there" 40-yard shot pretty much a slam dunk for the skilled hunter who has taken the time to pattern his gun and know its — and his own — limitations. This, in turn, has made using shotgun gauges smaller than the 12 viable and increasingly popular.





↑ The judicious use of decoys like the Avian-X HDR Hen and HDR Feeder Hen will help draw gobblers inside the 40-yard mark, where a .410 can do its work.

Properly set up and fed the right ammunition, the 3-inch 20-gauge turkey gun is extremely lethal and is lighter to pack around the woods, and it produces measurably less recoil than the old-school 3-inch 12-gauge. Taking that to the next level today is the use of the .410 bore as an effective turkey hunting tool.

Why a .410?

At first blush, turkey hunting with a .410 may seem like crazy talk. If you want to drop down below the 12 gauge, why not use a 20?

The .410 makes sense when you think about youth and small-framed hunters, as well as first-timers who might be a little recoil shy. It's light and easy to carry (and .410 shotshells are way smaller and lighter than 12-gauge shotshells, too), which also makes a .410 an excellent choice for run-and-gun hunting. For example, the popular 3-inch Mossberg 500 .410 Turkey Gun and Mossberg SA-410 Turkey autoloader, both with Mossy Oak Bottomland camo finish, weigh just 6½ pounds with 24- and 26-inch barrels, respec-

→ Adding an optic sight to the .410 will make precise shooting so much easier than when using open sights.

tively. Both come with an extended choke tube (X-Full in the 500, XX-Full in the autoloader) and fiber-optic sights. The 500 is drilled and tapped so you can add a Picatinny rail, while the autoloader has a Pic rail installed, and thus, an optical sight can be easily added.

As is the case with any turkey-hunting shotgun, choosing a .410 shotgun built specifically for the task at hand is several steps above using the old .410 you've had for years. At the same time, these turkey guns can also have a place in a dove field, hunting small game like rabbits and squirrels, or on a clay target range, too.

The Ammunition Is Everything (Almost)

While turkey-specific .410 shotguns are The Bomb, what really has made it all possible is the introduction of shotshells filled with heavier-than-lead shotgun pellets. Together with wads designed for the task at hand, this changed the game exponentially.

TSS (Tungsten Super Shot) is an incredibly dense shot — the material is 56 percent denser than lead and 22 percent denser than tungsten — which means that turkey hunters can now use smaller pellet sizes than is the case with lead shot while achieving greater



terminal performance. Tests have shown that a No. 9 TSS pellet will penetrate as deeply as a No. 5 lead pellet at all practical distances. That means regardless of the gauge shotgun you're hunting with, using this type of ammunition allows you to send a whole lot more pellets downrange without losing the load's lethality.

This is what makes the .410 a viable turkey-hunting gun today. Most 3-inch TSS-filled .410 turkey loads feature $\frac{1}{16}$ -ounce of No. 9 shot encased in a specialized, full-length wad designed to prevent direct contact of the super-hard TSS with the barrel. Typically this load contains about 295 pellets. In comparison, a 2-ounce load of 12-gauge, 3-inch, No. 4 lead shot contains about 270 pellets. Testing done by engineers at Federal Premium using a shotgun with a 24.5-inch barrel and fixed full choke averaged 125 to 150 pellets in a 10-inch circle at 40 yards. These numbers are capable of cleanly killing a wild turkey at that distance and even rival the numbers produced by some 12-gauge turkey guns using No. 4 or No. 5 lead loads. In addition, test results also showed more than 3 inches of penetration in ballistic gel and deep dents, with a few pellets even busting completely through a thin sheet of steel at 40 yards.

As we like to say, they just can't take a lot of that!

→ The Mossberg 500 .410 Turkey Gun, topped with a GPO SPECTRADot optic sight and loaded with BOSS Tom turkey loads, hammered this nice South Texas gobbler at 30 steps.

Optic Sights Make a Difference, Too

The diminutive .410 bore gun produces a narrow shot pattern with an elongated shot string, regardless of the choke constriction. For all intents and purposes, shooting a tightly-choked .410 turkey gun is really more like shooting a big-bore rifle than a 12- or 20-gauge shotgun. To that end, aiming must be precise, and ensuring that the point of impact is true is critical. With the .410, most hunters will have better success using some sort of optic system to aim through, as a single bead or open rifle sights can be tough to put in the right spot on a gobbler if he is hung up at 40 yards and will not come closer. You want to be as precise as possible, especially at the far end of the .410's effective range.

On a March 2021 hunt in South Texas, the Mossberg 500 .410 Turkey Gun I had in hand was topped with a GPO SPECTRADot red-dot optic mounted on a Picatinny rail.

"A lightweight, easy-to-carry .410 shotgun is a pleasure to hunt with and as deadly as a heart attack."

This made precision shooting possible. Truth is, all my turkey shotguns today have some sort of red-dot optic on top. They make a world of difference, especially for folks like me who have aging eyes.

Why Not?

Despite the fact that modern technology has given us the ability to build a 12-gauge turkey gun/load combination capable of cleanly killing a big

gobbler at 70 yards or more, for most of us, wild turkey hunting is all about getting right in their face, as close as we can, enjoying the rutting and strutting and gobbling and yelping and aggressive attacks on our decoy spreads, or outwitting the old, silent Tom that comes in silently, on cat's feet. We want our turkey guns to deliver a lethal payload on target, every time.

A lightweight, easy-to-manuever-and-carry-all-day .410 shotgun is both a pleasure to hunt with and as deadly as a heart attack.

It's easy to bring to bear on target and hold steady once there. Compared to shooting a 3-inch 12-gauge, felt recoil is much, much less, making it perfect for all of us, and especially small-framed hunters, as well as youngsters and novice sportsmen. Also, the muzzle blast is much less noticeable than that of even a 20-gauge.

Will a .410 be a 70-yard gobbler stopper? Unlikely. A 40-yard

death ray? When loaded with a modern 3-inch shotshell packed with non-toxic pellets, patterned to ensure that load delivers a tight, consistent pattern, and topped with an optic sight? You bet! **HR**



↑ Using a full or extra full choke tube will improve the performance of modern TSS or tungsten shot exponentially.

.410 Turkey Shotshells

Several ammo makers are now offering specialized turkey-hunting shotshells for the .410. Sadly, finding some – even on the manufacturer's websites – can be challenging. Still, here are the options, with prices taken from the manufacturer's websites.

Apex Ammunition: $\frac{7}{8}$ -oz. No. 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ TSS shot, muzzle velocity of 1,060 fps, packed 10 to the box. MSRP: \$53.99.

BOSS Tom: $\frac{1}{16}$ -oz. No. 9 tungsten shot, muzzle velocity of 1,100 fps, packed 10 to the box. MSRP: \$60.

Federal Premium Heavyweight TSS: $\frac{1}{16}$ -oz. No. 9 TSS shot, muzzle velocity of 1,100 fps, packed five to the box. MSRP: \$40.99.

HEVI-Shot HEVI-X Strut: $\frac{1}{16}$ -oz. No. 6 tungsten shot, muzzle velocity 1,250 fps, packed five to the box. MSRP \$34.99.





High-End Glass

When it comes to optics, the old saying is true: You get what you pay for.

BY MARK CHESNUT

As I struggled to get my crosshairs settled behind the shoulder of the big 10-point Oklahoma whitetail, I was beginning to feel like I was fighting a losing battle. Shooting time had finally arrived, but my scope's lens was mostly fogged over, and the problem was getting worse the more exasperated I got.

Trying a different magnification only made things go from bad to worse, as the scope had limited eye relief, and I immediately lost the buck through the scope. By the time I found him again, I still couldn't see him clearly enough to be sure where my crosshairs were centered. A few sec-

onds later, I watched what was at the time my "buck of my lifetime" walk off the wheat field and into the thick timber along the edge.

If you are thinking I had a bad case of buck fever, you're right. But I also had another major problem — a bargain-store riflescope that didn't allow me to see everything as clearly as I needed to. The year was 1988, and I had recently splurged and spent the princely sum of \$500 for a new deer rifle. But then I had committed the cardinal sin of many beginning deer hunters — spending \$49 on an entry-level scope to go on top of that fine rifle.



Imported by B&W Inc., Meriden, Conn. Made in Germany. Winchester is a registered trademark of the Winchester Company.





↑ (front image) Zeiss Conquest V4

Of Riflescopes & High-End Glass

Fact is, having a better riflescope would probably have ensured I put that buck's head on my wall. However, it's important to note that there's really not a good definition for the term "high-end" where riflescopes are concerned. And that can make it difficult for some hunting retailers to determine which scopes to carry in their inventory.

Mike Jensen is owner and CEO of GPO-USA, the American branch of German Precision Optics. Jensen has been in the firearms business his whole life (his parents had a gun shop) and has held vice president positions at Marlin and Remington, as well as serving as national sales manager for Swarovski and president and CEO of Zeiss U.S. operations.



↑ Bushnell Elite 4500



"Glass is such a tricky discussion, and 'high-end' is like saying, 'I want a great car,'" Jensen said in an exclusive interview with Hunting Retailer. "High-end" is a little bit of a nebulous term, and everybody's eyes see a little different level of quality of 'high-end.' The more of an optics geek you are, the more 'high-end' really means you want no visual distortion, edge clarity, and very, very sharp image resolutions at the highest magnification you can get it at. Because that sharpness of the image is what creates a lot of that 'high-end' perception."

In fact, according to Jensen, scope manufacturing is so much better nowadays compared to 15 or 20 years ago that the line between an average riflescope and a "high-end" unit is somewhat blurred. Still, the difference is obvious to those who compare scopes carefully and want the best their hard-earned dollars can afford.

"Spending the extra money for the better glass—the better resolution, the better light trans-



mission—is always money well spent,” Jensen said. “What’s funny about optics: Once you start transitioning to that ‘high-end,’ it’s very, very hard to go back and buy a mid-tier product.”

Greg Palkowitsh, design engineer for Bushnell, has been designing and engineering riflescopes and other optics for nearly a decade. Palkowitsh

→ GPO Spectra 4-16x50i



said there are a number of factors that go into determining whether an optic performs well enough to meet the “high-end” standard.

“There’s a lot that goes into even a low-end rifle scope,” he said. “What really kind of determines between the different optical qualities is the material of the glass, design tolerances and manufacturing tolerances, difference in coatings and the number of coatings, and the number of lens elements within a system.”

The difference in coatings and the number of lenses is an interesting discussion in itself—and one that many consumers, and even some retailers, don’t understand.

“Every system is a different optical subscription, but a ‘high-end’ rifle scope might have 15 to 17 pieces of glass, whereas a budget one might have nine pieces,” Palkowitsh said. “Coating-wise, a coated optic means you only have one layer of coating on the outside surfaces of the lens that face the outside world. When you go to fully coated, then each lens has at least one set of coatings per glass-to-air surface. When you go to fully multi-coated, that means there is more than one coating per lens face. Most of the higher-end scopes might have 10-plus coatings per surface.”

The number of lenses, the coatings applied

“Manufacturers are pushing the limits of optical design, especially when it comes to both stand-alone rangefinders and binoculars with rangefinding capability.”

and a few other factors weigh heavily in how much light is transmitted from the target to the shooter’s eye. And that light transmission is one of the things that varies greatly among low-end and high-end scopes.

“For the higher-end scopes, you’re going to have higher light transmission — probably 92 upwards to about 94 percent,” he said. “A lot of your entry-level scopes are in that 78 to 80 percent range. Then the mid-tiers are usually upper 80s to low 90s. When you get to those upper levels, it’s hard for the human eye to determine one that’s 91 from one that’s, say, 93.”

For retailers, GPO-USA’s Jensen said the key to finding the right rifle scope for customers,

whether “high-end” optics or otherwise, is to find out how the customer intends to use the rifle scope. And that requires some initiative on the salesperson’s part.

“Most retailers understand the direction of their market,” he said. “My number one advice to retailers is try to coach your sales people to ask a few additional questions on the scope side of it. What are you using it for? What’s your price range? What kind of quality standard are you looking for? Are there any technical features, like specific turrets, you’re looking for? Are you using it in low-light situations on a regular basis? Is it important to be able to use it in a very low-light situation?”

“That last question can steer that salesman immediately to, ‘OK, I think a \$500 rifle scope is going to suffice for this guy,’ or, ‘It’s going to take \$1,000 to really have this guy happy with his purchase.’”

Jensen believes that extra effort by sales people will lead to not only more rifle scope sales, but to repeat sales later on — another critical goal of all retailers.

“One objective of a retailer is to build repeat customers,” he said. “The customer has to believe the guy behind the counter cares about him, and that’s what none of the chain stores can supply.”



The specialty retail shops have an opportunity to convince that customer that they really care and really want to help them.”

As for Bushnell’s Palkowitsh, he says that it’s very difficult for riflescope shoppers to really learn anything about the scopes they are considering while looking through them inside the store, since lighting conditions are far better than they would be in the field.

“The hard part about picking out optics is when you’re in a storefront looking across the room at 100 yards, at most, at a stuffed animal or whatever, the fluorescent lights do not represent natural light,” he said. “Checking a scope inside versus outside is very, very difficult. The best thing to do is see if they’ll let you take it outside and actually compare them outside. If retailers have a way to let customers take scopes outside, put them on a v-block side by side and look through two or three like-type scopes together, they would definitely be able to see the winner out of those scopes.”

High-End Options

Now, let’s take a brief look at a handful of quality, mid-range scopes that retailers might consider



↑ Leupold VX5

carrying in their inventory and that could help bolster their bottom line.

The **Zeiss Conquest V4 3-12x56** is an outstanding riflescope that should impress even the biggest optics nerd that visits your shop. A combination of light weight and high performance, the scope features a 4x zoom ratio, a 30mm main tube and 90-percent light transmission from the target to the shooter’s eye. Lenses are coated with Zeiss’s proprietary LotuTec coating, which enables a clear, unhindered view in all weather conditions. MSRP is around \$1,000.

Swarovski has been making high-quality riflescopes for decades, and the **Swarovski Z5(i) 2.4-12x50** scope is another excellent option for the discerning hunter wanting the best riflescope he or she can afford. The scope’s high luminosity ensures hunters a clear look at their target at dawn and dusk and during other poor light conditions. The scope boasts 92% light transmission, and a third turret allows for parallax adjustments for long-range shots. MSRP is \$1,277.

The **Leupold VX-3i 4.5-14x40 Duplex** rifle-scope offers high-end optics quality in a more budget-minded package. This incredibly tough, very lightweight scope is built around Leupold’s

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← Swarovski's Z5(i)

and woods without breaking the bank. Featuring a 30mm main tube, proprietary GPObright high-transmission lens coating technology, PASSIONdrop hydrophobic exterior lens coatings and a double HD glass objective lens, the Spectra provides hunters with enhanced clarity, exceptional brightness and true color from dawn to dusk. Plus, the scope's iCONTROL illumination system can be adjusted between barely visible for low-light conditions or extremely bright for daylight usage. MSRP is \$749.99.

Bushnell might not always be viewed as being in the high-end realm, but those who believe otherwise likely haven't seen the company's scopes lately. Just introduced this summer, the **Bushnell Elite 4500 4X 4-16x50** is designed and manufactured to play with the big boys, with Ultra Wide Band Coatings to boost image clarity while cutting out glare. "Optics on these scopes are tremendous for the price," said Bushnell's Palkowitsh. "I'd put them up, optically, against scopes at twice the price." MSRP for the Elite 4500 4X 4-16x50 is \$299. **HR**

Elite Optical System and offers the light transmission, glare reduction and resolution that die-hard hunters demand for all-day performance. The CDS-ZL adjustment allows for 14.5 MOA of bullet drop, which equals 500 to 700 yards of travel

for most rifles. The scope is also 100 percent waterproof and fog proof, and carries the company's lifetime guarantee. MSRP is only \$499.

GPO-USA's Spectra 4-16x50i is designed for hunters who want peak performance in the fields

Your Fight Is Our Fight



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From the largest manufacturers to the smallest retailers, NSSF® fights to preserve our legacy and secure our future as a critical member of American industry. We fight with resources that promote legal gun ownership. We fight with initiatives that educate the public about responsible firearm ownership and safe participation in hunting and the shooting sports. And we fight on Capitol Hill and in state capitols nationwide—right alongside you—to ensure your ability to operate as a lawful and important business in your community is not infringed.

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A Double-Duty Rifle Goes West

Can a heavy varmint gun like the Franchi Momentum Elite Varmint also handle big game? Chambered in .224 Valkyrie, it sure can.





BY HILARY DYER

When it comes to hunting rifles, there are two extremes and a spectrum between them that your customers fall into. On one hand is the one-gun-to-do-everything shopper, and on the other hand is the buyer who wants a new rifle for every conceivable use. There's nothing wrong with either — although as a retailer, you probably love the frequent buyer — but most of your shoppers are going to fall somewhere in the middle. They're the guys and ladies who don't mind picking up a new gun for a particular use, but they realize they don't need it and they'll need some kind of excuse to buy. If the rifle can do double or triple duty, that's a major selling point and could be just the excuse they need.

I'd put myself in this category — the double-duty rifle appeals to me as a hunter and a buyer. When Franchi invited me on a Montana hunt to try out the Franchi Momentum Elite Varmint, I was interested. When they mentioned it was for pronghorn and prairie dogs, all with the .224 Valkyrie? I was in.

Franchi launched the Momentum, the first rifle in the company's 150-year history, in 2018. In 2020, the Elite version debuted, and Franchi followed that up with the Elite Varmint model in 2021. The Elite Varmint was designed with Benchrest shooting in mind. "It was designed to be a varmint gun — shot from a bench, from prone, whatever works best for you individually," says Bret Maffett, Franchi's product manager. "It's a little heavier. With the scope on we're probably talking 11 pounds or so, so it's not ideal for trekking through the fields. But the beauty of the calibers we chose is that there are loads out there suitable for the smaller big game to the lower end of medium-sized big game. So it can double for that purpose, which is why we chose to do this tandem-style hunt."

He wasn't kidding about that heavy part, as I found out over the course of several stalks before I got a pronghorn on the ground. We were hunting on the Crow reservation in southeastern Montana, and those hills are no joke for an Alabama girl. But the beauty of all that weight, combined with a light-recoiling cartridge to begin with, is almost no felt recoil and impressive accuracy. The Varmint Elite comes with a factory MOA guarantee, and as I verified with the bench and later over some prairie dog towns at long ranges, it more than delivers on that promise.



↑ The author found the Franchi Momentum Elite Varmint in .224 Valkyrie to be more than adequate for pronghorn.



The .224 Valkyrie

For ammo, we were shooting two different loads from Federal, using a 78-grain Barnes TSX bullet for antelope and a 60-grain Nosler tipped bullet for prairie dogs. And that's a huge benefit of the .224 Valkyrie: versatility.

"It's perfect for this prairie dog hunt, of course," said Federal engineer Jake Burns, who created the .224 Valkyrie himself a few years ago. We had taken a break from prairie dog shooting on a sunny Montana afternoon when I started asking questions about our ammo. "You get really good ballistics from the range of bullets we have," he continued. "For example, you've got this 60-grain Nosler tipped bullet we're shooting right now that, in a .223, for example, is gonna be 3,000 fps, whereas in this platform it's 3,300 fps. So you've got that additional flatness to the arc that buys you some more range and certainty, which is perfect in this scenario. The guys shooting coyotes really like the Valkyrie as well because you can have heavier bullets and more terminal performance, and it's still not too heavy from a recoil standpoint. As you're seeing here, it's still sufficient to kill up to whitetail-sized animals. It's kind of a good one-trick pony for anything from whitetail on down. If someone wanted to have one gun that kind of did everything in that range, the .224 Valkyrie is a great choice.

"This 78-grain Barnes TSX is a monolithic all-copper bullet," Jake continued. "It's a great opportunity for a heavier 22-caliber bullet. This is a perfect hunting bullet for that medium-sized game animal, like antelope, whitetail, things of that size. It's got all the same performance you typically see out of a TSX or an all-copper bullet — really good penetration, you still get expansion on the soft tissue, and in this load, out of a 24-inch barrel like we're shooting here, you'll get 2,850 fps out of the muzzle, so you get really good energy at a pretty wide range."

He's right, of course. I couldn't have asked for better terminal performance on my pronghorn, but I shot it at just over 100 yards. What about farther shots? "I mean, I hit my antelope at 640 yards and this bullet killed it," Jake said. "Typically, you don't expect to see that kind of performance out of a 22-caliber bullet, but that's what you get out of this cartridge."



↑ Higher-end features like a fluted bolt, a crisp, adjustable trigger, TSA adjustability in the stock and bronze Cerakote help the Momentum Elite Varmint punch above its weight class when it comes to bang for the buck.

The Elite Varmint

I was more than sold on the .224 Valkyrie based on its performance at the range and on the pronghorn. But what really sold me was the next day's prairie dog shoot, where the double-duty versatility of the Elite Varmint became evident.

"It is a versatile rifle because of the caliber choices," Maffett emphasized. "I could sell you a standard .308 that's great for big game, but you're not going to sit around and pop prairie dogs for hours with a .308. But you can take this, you can come out here and have some fun, and if you have a deer or antelope tag, you can decide to pack everything up and go set out across the prairie and see what you find. It was designed to have very nice varmint-type capabilities but also to be able to be slung up so you can go out and shoot what and where you want. Take ranchers, for instance. They might be set up to shoot coyotes that are after their livestock or to cull the prairie dog population. And they might want to take that same rifle, because they're comfortable with it, and shoot a whitetail or two. This gun provides the capability for all of that because of the caliber choices and the high grade of ammunition available in today's market."

When I tell you the Franchi Momentum Elite Varmint is versatile, I don't just mean that it works on multiple types of game with a variety of ammo options. I also mean that it will work well for almost any shooter — and that's primarily a function of fit.

"The big thing with Franchi is our motto: 'Feels right,'" Maffett told me while we took a break from prairie dog shooting. "All of our guns are built around ergonomics and giving the shooter a good shooting experience in terms of comfort. We looked at the ergonomic aspect of the original Momentum stock and we optimized it for varmint and benchrest shooting by doing things like flattening the forend. Then we took the back end of the stock and said ok, this is where some adjustability needs to come into play."

Franchi accomplished some of that adjustability via TSA recoil pads. The Elite Varmint comes with the standard size, giving the gun a 14-inch length of pull, but a shorter and a longer version are available.

"The TSA adjustability is not widely talked about — it gets forgotten sometimes, but it's the same for all Franchi firearms," Bret revealed. "So we took that concept and applied it to the comb as well. This gun comes with a medium-height comb. There's also a higher version and a shorter





↑ A long morning hunting a prairie dog town is what the Momentum Elite Varmint is made for, but the rifle is also well suited to small- to medium-sized big game.

version, and there will be a flush-mount version as well. Ultimately, you'll have a full range of comb height adjustability."

The gun's grip has the same type of mounting as the comb, and Franchi plans to offer a range of grip contours that can be swapped out. The Elite Varmint has more of a vertical benchrest-type grip, but the company is planning to release a more standard hunting version and is considering other contours as well, so buyers can get an ideal fit in their hand.

The Specs

"We wanted to provide a fully-featured hunting rifle right out of the box," Bret told me. "We camoed the stocks in popular patterns and added Cerakote to the barrel, receiver and bolt handle. We added a Picatinny rail and a muzzle brake for all the Elite options in matching Cerakote, so people could go out and get something that was ideal for them, with the fit and style they wanted."

The Franchi Momentum Varmint Elite features a rugged synthetic stock with removable cheek rest, removable checkered-polymer grip, and a versatile OptiFade Subalpine camo pattern. The heavy, free-floating, spiral-fluted barrel has a weather-resistant, glare-reducing bronze Cerakote finish, and the barrel is threaded. A muzzle brake is included — not because a heavy rifle in .224 Valkyrie needs a muzzle brake by any means, Bret admits, but because Franchi has found that shooters just want one, and guns with muzzle brakes sell better. Hey, perception is reality, right?



↑ Federal's 60-grain Nosler tipped bullet made short work of prairie dogs, and stepping up to Federal's 78-grain Barnes TSX load gave the author plenty of juice for pronghorn.

The bolt is fluted, with three locking lugs and a 60-degree throw for fast, smooth cycling and rapid follow-up shots — which I appreciated when the prairie dog shooting got hot and heavy. I found the single-stage trigger, which is adjustable from 2 to 4 pounds, to be crisp and clean.

Other features include a Picatinny rail and two removable box magazines — one flush-mount and one extended. For 2021, the Elite Varmint debuted in .22-250 Rem., .223 Rem. and .224 Valkyrie. The 6.5 Creedmoor and .308 Win. are coming in 2022, as are additional camo/Cerakote combinations.

This gun is just plain comfortable to shoot, and that goes back to the ergonomics. With a smooth action and a crisp trigger, you can't go wrong. And of course, the virtual lack of recoil helps, too.

How to Sell It

"The best way to sell this gun is to get it in somebody's hands," Bret advises retailers. "I haven't found consumers out there that don't like the feel,

the look of it, the features that it offers, the way the bolt and trigger work and feel — and that's how I've had the most success really drumming up support and sales. I bring this gun out for my friends to shoot; if I'm going on hunts, I bring an extra, and that's where the rubber really seems to meet the road. People are like, hey, this is really nice.

"Franchi as a whole, even though we've been around for 153 years, still isn't the most well-known brand out there. The brand was completely re-envisioned and all the products redesigned in the early 2010s, and it's really started to come into its own the last three or four years. A lot of that is just getting stuff into people's hands, letting them try it, letting them work the action and try the trigger and feel how the gun feels to them, and that's typically what sells it.

"If a dealer is just transactional, it'll be more of a difficult sell for them. If they're hands-on type dealers who know their customers and want to work with them and want them to be happy, it is an excellent rifle platform that practically sells itself once people pick it up."

Encourage shoppers to handle the gun at your counter. Holding it, working the bolt and feeling the trigger is great, but have them pick it up and mount it, actually laying prone or crouching in the store or whatever they normally do in the field. Ask them how it feels. "I can guarantee it's going to feel better than pretty much anything else up on that shelf, because that's what we really designed it to be," said Bret. "The other piece is it's a fantastic consumer value, and I don't mean that from a 'cheap' standpoint. It's not a cheap rifle by any stretch of the imagination, but there are a lot of features in it that provide an excellent value for sub-\$1000."

The Varmint Elite retails for \$899 (MSRP), as compared to \$799 for the standard Momentum Elite, which has a lot of the same features without the adjustability.

"All of our rifles offer an MOA guarantee," Bret pointed out, "same as the Tikkas, the Brownings, the Bergaras, all that stuff. So, from an accuracy standpoint, it's easily comparable. And we're offering things that they don't; I think that would appeal to any consumer out there."

Over the course of three days, I killed a pronghorn and untold numbers of prairie dogs with the Franchi Momentum Elite Varmint. And although I can't say it's an ideal spot-and-stalk rifle, in .224 Valkyrie, it proved more than capable of handling medium-sized big game and really excelled in a bench-shooting scenario. For your customers who fall somewhere in the middle of the one-gun-for-everything/different-gun-for-every-use spectrum, this could be an excellent double-duty rifle. **HR**





Wine Country Blacktails

One unique Western hunt provided the perfect proving ground for an affordable, functional rifle and gear.

BY GORDY KRAHN

When *New York Tribune* founder Horace Greeley penned the famous phrase, “Go West, Young Man” in 1865, it set the stage for the exploration and exploitation of America’s remarkable natural resources — many of them four-legged and sporting coveted antlers or horns. North American hunters have been “going west” in droves ever since.

The pioneer spirit that drove westward expansion across the vast American frontier was vital to our nation’s early development. Young men from every imaginable calling felt the primal tug to tame the Wild West — to see what lay beyond the next rise. They migrated from points east in great numbers, seeking fame and fortune in a land of bountiful opportunity. And while their motivation was arguably self-centered, their actions laid the foundation on which this great nation now rests.



Frankly, I was devoting little thought to Horace Greeley or the American pioneer spirit as I gazed out the passenger window of Ryan Newkirk's Ford pickup as we methodically cruised the narrow two-tracks that dissected the Steinbeck Vineyard & Winery's 500+ acres near Paso Robles, California. It was just a half-hour till sundown on day two of a four-day hunt for Columbia blacktails and we'd been playing cat and mouse with a handsome 4x3 buck since early the first morning. Crammed into the truck was the rest of our motley crew — Linda Powell, Director of Media Relations for Mossberg, wordsmiths Dave Draper and Jeff Johnston, and Brooks Hansen, Marketing Communications Manager for Camp Chef.

Ryan, our host and guide, represents the sixth generation of a family that moved to the Paso Robles area in 1884 and purchased the property we were hunting on in 1921. Originally a barley and cattle farm, Ryan's great, great grandparents put down roots — working the land and building the original house and outbuildings. But it wasn't until 1982 that the Steinbecks began growing grapes and distributing their yield to area winemakers. The deer came with the property, a product of the cultivated crops and temperate climate of California's Central Coast region.

"That's him," Ryan lowered his bino and eased the pickup forward to get a better angle on a cluster of deer that were milling around in the rows of neatly planted cabernet grapes that stretched to the skyline and then disappeared over a rise in the field — a couple of smallish bucks, a handful of does ... and the buck we had been stalking. "We need to get some elevation if we're going to get a clear shot," Ryan said as he dropped the truck into gear, slowly drove around the back side of the opposite hill and parked out of sight.

A stiff wind helped mitigate our sound and movement as we exited the truck and sneaked diagonally across the hillside trying to work into position for a shot. Just as we got to where we had a clear look at the buck, he bedded down. And to make matters worse, a small buck laid down right in front of



him. Visibility was limited, so I got on Ryan's tall shooting sticks for a standing shot and prepared to wait the buck out. The wind was shoving me around like a schoolyard bully, and I was completely uncomfortable as I tried to settle my riflescope's dancing crosshairs on the buck's body 150 yards away. "Let's try to get a different angle on him," Ryan said, seeing my dilemma. "Maybe get a little higher where you can get down on your bipod to get out of the wind a bit." Ryan folded his shooting sticks, and I followed him as we eased through the rows of grapes.

We moved about a dozen rows over where the visibility was better, and I was able to get into a kneeling

position and firm up the sight picture. We had about 40 minutes of legal shooting light left, and the bucks were giving no indication they were going to move anytime soon. We weighed our options, each with its risks. Do we try to go around and come at him from another angle —

grains of Hornady GMX copper into his boiler room. The buck bolted and made a death run, the drama ending when he piled up a half-dozen rows over. Ryan slapped me on the back, and we walked over to have a look at my first-ever Columbia blacktail.

↑ Good optics, like the Riton X7 Conquer 3-18x50mm riflescope and 5 Primal 10x42mm HD bino the author used on this hunt, are necessary to spot midday bucks tucked into the heavy shadows of grape vines.

try to shoot him in his bed? Do we make some noise and try to get him to stand up? Or do we back out and come back in the morning?

Ryan decided to try some soft whistles. "Get ready — there won't be a lot of time when he stands up," Ryan whispered. The little buck became agitated and stood up, looking our way for the source of the sound, but even when he stepped out of the way, there was no ethical shot at the bedded buck. Then, as if on cue, the big buck stood and began walking directly away from us. He was climbing toward the skyline, and my window of opportunity was closing with each step. In seconds he would walk out of my life.

I was easing off the trigger when he gave me the opportunity I was waiting for, turning slightly to exit the row of grapes. I quickly found the crease behind his shoulder and tugged the trigger, sending 130



Go West, Young Man!

I vividly remember my first hunting trip out West, and this unique hunt reminded me why I love hunting the western reaches of this great continent. Growing up in northern Minnesota, I'd often dreamed of exploring those expansive and exotic lands beyond the "Big Muddy." So, I'd saved up my pennies and heeded Greeley's inspirational words and went west — two full days of it. I was awed, almost overwhelmed, by the beautiful vistas, the wide-open



spaces and the abundant game.

But like too many Eastern hunters who venture west for the first time, I was ill prepared for the task in many respects. My equipment was a hodgepodge of gear more suited to the Midwestern terrain I'd grown up hunting — from my rifle, optics and bullets down to my boots. I hadn't even thought to bring a daypack. I survived that hunt — enjoyed it, even — but it could have been so much more if I'd been better prepared. So now, after nearly four decades of “going west,” I take a more educated approach based on accumulated experiences. I even have specialized gear lists on my home computer to remind me of which gear to pack for specific locales, species and terrain.

As a retailer, you are in the position to make or break a customer's out-of-state hunt — those who visit your store looking for not only the appropriate gear but also advice. Don't let them down on either count. Drill them for information on where they will be hunting, what they will be hunting and what their expectations are. If they are enlisting the services of an outfitter, a quick browse of the guide's website will typically give you the information you need. Then, based on your experience and research, provide them with recommendations for the gear they will need and advice on how they might optimize that hunt.

Outfitters are quick to help because well-prepared clients are more likely to be successful. As an example, here are some recommendations Ryan Newkirk gives clients who travel west to hunt blacktails on the winery. “Bring a decent variety of clothing,” he said. “It might 40 degrees in the morning and overcast and chilly, but it could be 110 degrees come afternoon.” He adds that a high-quality binocular is essential for picking apart the terrain. “You need to look into the shadows and be able to pick up a deer, and then decide if it's one you're interested in pursuing.” He also says that while most shots on his property are likely to be less than 200 yards, the po-



↑ Mossberg's Patriot Long Range Hunter chambered in 6.5 PRC provided all the muscle needed to anchor the author's big-bodied blacktail buck.

tential is there for longer shots, and clients should be prepared to take a 300-plus-yard shot. That means the appropriate rifle, optics and ammo — and practice, practice, practice.

As an example, here's a short list of the gear I selected for this hunt by doing my research and asking the appropriate questions.



The Rifle

Hunters with an appetite for precision and in-the-field durability appreciate the commitment and extraordinary treatment that go into building special-purpose rifles that serve a wide variety of hunting wants and needs — from anchoring deep-woods Northern whitetails and black bears to blacktails, elk, pronghorn and mule deer in the wide-open West. Whether it's a quick-handling AR-platform rifle or lever gun for swift and decisive action or a precision-built bolt gun fine-tuned for superior long-range performance, special-purpose firearms are tailor made for today's equal-opportunity multi-species hunter.

“That was the whole idea when Mossberg came up with the Patriot bolt-action lineup — that we'd have a classic hunting rifle platform, and from there we would make specific and dedicated models,” said Linda as we chatted about the Patriot LR (Long-Range) Hunters we were using on the blacktail hunt. It's a rifle fine-tuned for hunters who exploit wide open spaces. “We have a long-range precision rifle that's dedicated to those people who want to get into that type of long-range shooting, and that led us over to the Patriot LR Hunter. And as long-range shooting became more popular, it migrated over to the hunting market as well. But some of the rifles that are dedicated to long-range shooting aren't necessarily equipped to take out into the field — they're too heavy and too bulky. The LR Hunter is a portable and carryable hunting rifle with the benefit of a long-range platform.”

Powell's advice to hunting retailers: “One of the keys when selling anybody a gun is that you understand what [the customer's] needs are,” she said. “For example, if they're going out West to hunt for the first time, it's



important to understand they might need an inherently accurate rifle designed for long-range shooting.” Powell says it’s the salesperson’s responsibility to help them make the right decisions so they end up with the rifle, optics and ammo that will give them the best opportunity for success in the field.

Available in four popular calibers — .308 Win., 6.5mm Creedmoor, 6.5 PRC and .300 Win. Mag. — the Patriot LR Hunter is based on Mossberg’s twin-lug, push-feed machined-steel action and features a standard contour, free-floating barrel with an 11-degree match crown with straight-edge fluting and is threaded for the addition of a suppressor. Its button-rifled barrel is constructed of carbon steel with a matte blue finish, and a top-mounted Picatinny rail accommodates the addition of optics. Other standard features of this classic bolt action include a Monte Carlo synthetic stock, oversized bolt handle and Mossberg’s Lightning Bolt Action 2- to 7-pound user-adjustable trigger. MSRP: \$766. Contact: www.mossberg.com

The Optics

A wise hunting buddy once told me, “Buy the best glass you can afford. You can’t hit what you can’t see.” That golden nugget emphasizes the need to top your long-range rifles with optics that will allow you to obtain optimal performance. It doesn’t make sense to invest a bunch of Benjamins in a tack-driving rifle capable of punching minute-of-angle groups and then equip it with substandard glass that inhibits that capability. There are several factors to consider when purchasing a scope: the type of fire-arm on which it will sit, the critters you will be hunting and the type of terrain in which you will be hunting. When hunting the wide-open West, it’s important to select optics

→ A match made in heaven – the pairing of a fine craft wine and homegrown protein.



↑ The author with his first-ever Columbia blacktail, a “cabernet buck” harvested on the Steinbeck Winery vineyard.

that match the long-range capabilities of your rifle — and to also have the magnification range to deal with close and personal encounters when hunting broken terrain.

It would seem intuitive that a low-power scope — say the 2-7x40mm that served you well in the whitetail woods back East — would leave you wanting more when a boisterous bull elk or monster muley or blacktail buck steps out of the scrub brush and gives you the bad-eye at 400 yards. Also important are those features that aid in long-range accuracy and efficiency, such as a first focal plane reticle, large, light-gathering objective lens, fast focus eyepiece and zero-stop turrets to mention a few. Only when the long-range hunter is equipped with such will he or she wring every ounce of accuracy from their rifle.



For riflemen and women looking for a long-range optics solution, the Riton X7 Conquer 3-18x50mm rifle scope I used on my blacktail hunt fills the bill, featuring a first focal plane illuminated reticle with HD/ED glass, integrated removable throw lever, and advanced zero stop turrets for an instant and reliable return to zero. It has 41 mils of internal elevation adjustment, six levels of red illumination with an “off” setting between each level, 1/10 MRAD windage and elevation adjustments and fast-focus eyepiece. The Riton X7 Conquer is constructed from aircraft-grade aluminum to hold up in the toughest hunting environments and is 100 percent waterproof, fogproof and shockproof. And so you can take a good look before you leap, Riton’s 5 Primal 10x42mm HD bino will help pick apart the Western terrain and determine trophy potential. They are built on a lightweight magnesium frame that can handle the most rugged applications and feature Riton HD glass for eye-fatigue-eliminating clarity. MSRP \$1,999.99/riflescope; \$599.99/Bino. Contact: www.ritonoptics.com

The Ammo

During these ammunition-challenged times, it has never been more important to provide state-hopping customers with quality cartridges for use in their favorite hunting firearms. This requires forethought and planning as ammo companies struggle to keep up with demand. And this becomes even more critical when traveling to a state such as California, where only nonlead ammunition may be used for hunting.

Ammo companies have stepped up to the plate with lead-free offerings that perform admirably on big game. Hornady’s new Outfitter Copper Alloy eXpanding CX ammo, as an example, provides uniform, controlled expansion, deep penetration and +95 percent weight retention. Its nickel-plated cases are corrosion resistant and waterproofed to ensure protection from moisture. The 130-grain 6.5 PRC loads we used

on our blacktail hunt performed admirably — four one-shot kills. Keep these and other nontraditional ammo options on hand for patrons traveling to California or other areas that require lead-free bullets. MSRP for a box of 20 6.5 PRC 130-grain CX is \$72.33. Contact: www.hornady.com

“Having grown up in northern Minnesota, I’d often dreamed of exploring those expansive and exotic lands beyond the Big Muddy. So, I’d heeded Greeley’s inspirational words, saved up my pennies and went West — two full days of it.”



↑ What could be better than a venison steak dinner paired with wine from the very grounds where both were harvested?

The Food and Drink

The most popular guy or gal in any hunting camp is, without dispute, the camp cook. A healthy appetite generated by a long day in the field brings out the hungry beast in the best of us. And what better way to tame that beast than to serve up

genuine home cooked meals? But doing the job to culinary perfection requires the right tools.

As a hunting retailer, you have the power to anoint the new king or queen of deer camp — by providing those accouterments needed to turn freshly field-dressed game into exquisite table fare. Here, the folks at Camp Chef have you covered — pellet grills, flat top grills, cast iron cookery, propane grills and smokers — oh, my! And think about all the accessories primed for cross-selling that major purchase — seasonings, charcoal pellets and starters, cleaning tools and supplies, grilling utensils and the like. Cha-Ching!

Brooks Hansen, Marketing Communications Manager for Camp Chef, served as culinary wizard during our Steinbeck Winery stay and put the company’s top-of-the-line cooking tools to the test. I’d give him an A+. He proved that cooking skills and the proper implements can turn a freshly killed beast into mouth-watering morsels with the flip of a spatula. And you can give Average Joe a fighting chance to do the same by outfitting him with the equipment that puts the pro in pro chef. Contact: www.campchef.com

And, of course, no gourmet meal is complete without a fine wine pairing to enhance the delicate flavors of both

food and drink — hardly a problem at the Steinbeck Winery. Its selection of California craft wines complements any meal — especially fresh venison. My favorite mating for the medium-rare venison Brooks served was its Cabernet Sauvignon, with undercurrents of black currant and cherry, and the smell of the winery’s soil during the cool of the day. The finish is soft and long with smooth and age-worthy tannin. Visitors to the area can stop in for a tour and tasting, or check them out at www.steinbeckwines.com

The compulsion to respond to the allure of the West has spanned generations of Americans, and many of the wonders that first attracted early pioneers to “go west” still tug at modern hunters. To answer the call of the wild. To climb the next rise and view the next vista. To wander for hours without crossing property boundaries. To chase magnificent Western bucks and bulls. To respond to Greeley’s poetic challenge to “Go West, Young man.” **HR**



HUNTING RETAILER

GEAR ROUNDUP

MUZZLELOADER HUNTING ACCESSORIES

Specialized gear for those who love the tradition and challenge of hunting with blackpowder rifles.

BY GORDY KRAHN

Hunting with a smoke pole — whether it's a traditional sidelock or modern inline rifle — requires specialized gear that make these sometimes-fussy firearms perform to their full potential. And for hunting retailers, that provides an opportunity to reap the full profit of a muzzleloader sale by cross-selling all those accessories that will make that rifle and its owner the very best they can be. Customers will leave your establishment with everything they need to be a successful shooter/hunter and you will add a bunch of dead presidents to your bottom line. So first and foremost, that means adding a bunch of extras to the shopping cart. And these accessories go beyond those things that make a muzzleloader go bang, such as powder and primers. Included on the shopping list should be cleaning supplies, speed loaders, bullets, optics, storage bags — the list goes on and on. Be sure to have an assortment of these goodies on hand when that throwback mountain man walks into your shop looking for blackpowder gear.





BUSHNELL PRIME MULTI-TURRET RIFLESCOPE

The Prime 3-12x40mm Multi-Turret riflescope from Bushnell (MSRP \$229.99) includes seven turrets to turn a slug gun, rifle or muzzleloader into a freezer filling tack driver – one standard MOA turret as well as six additional turrets calibrated for popular hunting and shooting loads. This lightweight and compact riflescope has a simple Multi-X reticle with a side focus range from 10 yards to infinity. The Prime 3-12x40mm riflescope also features fully multicoated optics, ultra-wide band coatings and Bushnell's exclusive EXO barrier for a clear, bright, fog-free view when it matters most. Turret caps guarantee shooters never lose their turret position due to bumps and scrapes in the field. This optic is IPX7 waterproof rated and covered by a full lifetime ironclad warranty.

www.bushnell.com



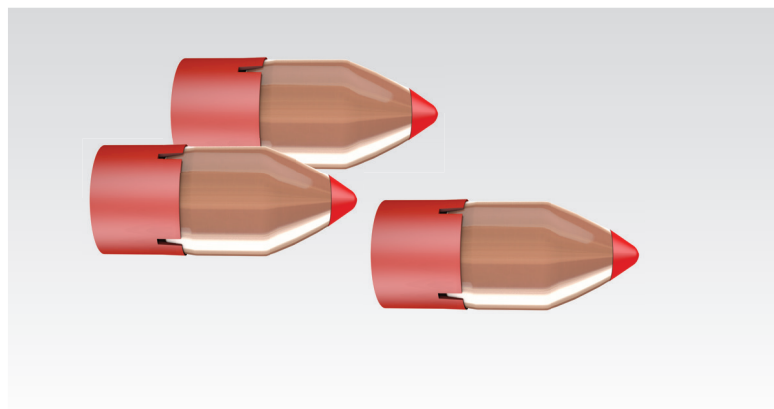
CVA UNIVERSAL SPEED LOADER AND POUCH

The CVA Universal Speed Loader Pouch with two integrated speed loaders (MSRP \$36) is designed for fast and efficient reloading in the field. The pouch features a SpeedClip that mounts to any belt or sling, allowing for convenient and fast reloading and holds two integrated tubes, each optimized to accommodate three blackpowder or blackpowder substitute pellets or loose powder and a bullet. The speed pouch is designed to be installed on the buttstock of the rifle, and its clear florescent orange finish holds bullet and powder in separate compartments. The lid accommodates either 209 primers or a CVA Vari-Flame adapter. www.cva.com



FEDERAL 80-GRAIN EQUIVALENT FIRESTICK

New for 2021, hunters now have an 80-grain option when using Federal Premium FireSticks (MSRP \$27.99/box of 10). The polymer capsule is filled with clean-burning Hodgdon Triple Eight powder and charges from the breech of the Traditions NitroFire rifle, with the bullet loaded from the muzzle. Due to the polymer capsule design, FireSticks are impervious to moisture and the elements, built to the same tight tolerances as Federal Premium factory ammunition for consistency and accuracy. FireSticks de-charge quickly, simply and safely by slipping them out of the breech – there's no need to fire the rifle. For use with 209 shotgun primers (not included). www.federalpremium.com



HORNADY .50-CALIBER BORE DRIVER FTX BULLET

Fast and easy to load, the .50-caliber 290-grain Bore Driver FTX bullet from Hornady (Retail \$36.99/box of 20) delivers outstanding muzzleloader performance. At the heart of the system is a polymer base (not a sabot) that seals the bore to deliver maximum energy transfer and accuracy. Atop the base is the FTX bullet, featuring a rugged gilding metal jacket coupled with patented FlexTip technology that initiates expansion even at low velocities, enabling enhanced muzzleloader terminal performance. Its InterLock ring helps retain bullet weight upon impact and, when coupled with a tough copper alloy jacket, delivers deep penetration and controlled expansion for on-game lethality. The Bore Driver FTX is designed for medium-size game. www.hornady.com





TRADITIONS DELUXE POSSIBLES BAG

For muzzleloader hunters who want to keep their accessories organized and secure from the elements, the Deluxe Possibles Bag from Traditions Firearms (MSRP \$33.49) is an excellent solution. It features two pockets plus three accessory holders to hold lots of gear, and its quiet camo cloth construction helps hunters stay stealthy and hidden from prying eyes. Its long strap fits easily over the shoulder, and the front pocket has a quick clip for easy retrieval of accessories. The Deluxe Possibles Bag measures 10x10x6 inches and comes dressed in Reaper Buck camo. www.traditionsfirearms.com



T/C T17 PRO-HUNTER ACCESSORY KIT

Except powder and primers, the Thompson/Center T-17 Pro Hunter Accessory Kit (MSRP \$39.99) has the essential items for cleaning and firing an inline muzzleloader. The cleaning components ensure a sure ignition every time, and the included bullets provide excellent terminal performance in the field. The kit includes a 2-ounce bottle of T-17 bore cleaning solvent, .5-ounce tube of T-17 breech plug anti-seize grease, 40 2.5-inch dry cleaning patches, 25 2.5-inch cleaning and seasoning patches, breech plug cleaning brush, T-handle short starter, 10 .50-caliber Shockwave Super Glide sabot bullets, two Speed Shot load carriers, extended polymer coated cleaning jag and one T/C vehicle window decal. This is a great starter kit for any muzzleloader enthusiast. www.tcarms.com

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MTM CASE GARD MUZZLELOADER DRY BOX

As all muzzleloader enthusiasts know, blackpowder and blackpowder substitutes must be stored in a controlled environment to protect them from moisture. That is why MTM designed the new MuzzleLoader Dry Box (MSRP: \$28.60) – the ideal possible box for storing and transporting blackpowder and blackpowder gear on any hunt. No matter what the weather, its roomy base interior shuts out moisture with a tight, weather resistant O-ring seal. A large lift-out tray helps organize gear by keeping smaller items on top, not crushed or buried on the bottom. The 80 percent usable top access lid compartment divides specialty tools into five sections for quick retrieval. Thick side-wall construction, a heavy-duty latch and padlock tabs assure a secure barrier against uninvited guests. www.mtmcase-gard.com



WEAVER MUZZLELOADER BASES AND RINGS

Get the legendary holding power of Weaver scope bases and mounts specifically designed for use with modern in-line muzzleloaders (MSRP \$48.45). These complete mounting systems are expertly crafted for specific firearms, or smartly designed for a more universal fit. Either way, they provide everything needed to securely mount optics on modern muzzleloaders all in one convenient package. Made from lightweight aircraft-grade aluminum for added strength and weight reduction these one- and two-piece muzzleloader bases and rings are designed for use with 1-inch-diameter scopes. www.weaveroptics.com

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SELLING OPTICS

Customers want to test optics on guns. Let them!

BY DAVID MACCAR

Optics are a funny thing for new gun owners. It's contrarian that a tube of precision-made pieces of glass should be mounted atop a steel machine that houses and directs small explosions, but without scopes there would be no long-range shooting or precision shooting.

While their workings are not wildly complicated in principle, scopes are removed enough from what most folks deal with or work with on a day-to-day basis that they possess an air of mystery until a shooter gets used to them and their workings, or maybe after they break one or two.

Good glass is more accessible than ever today, especially now with long-range and precision shooting activities becoming more popular. For the customer, looking at a scope, holding it up to peer through it and reading a detailed explanation of the reticle's design and how it works are great — but they likely would prefer to shoulder a stock and look down the scope the way they would when actually shooting. So let them, and you don't need a range to do it.

If you move a lot of glass and have a lot of customers who have snapped up bolt guns, pistol caliber carbines or modern sporting rifles during the buying surge, they are going to want to mount scopes on them sooner or later. Brick-and-mortar stores and range-retail facilities can offer something no website can — the ability to actually aim through a scope, spin the turrets, see how clear the glass is and how sharply the reticle looks, and feel how easily or stiffly the ocular bell turns to adjust the zoom. That matters more for



NSSF
The Firearm Industry
Trade Association

moderate or high-priced optics than maybe any other gun accessory.

Utilize Display Models

It's wise to consider having display models available for the most popular scopes, but it's not enough to only have the scopes available for perusal at a customer's request.

If you're going to sacrifice inventory as floor models, you might as well go all the way. Keep rings or one-piece mounts attached to these display scopes. If a customer is interested, hand them the display model and ask if they would like to see it mounted.

Then you pull out the scope tester. There are a number of ways to construct one. You can even buy one.

Blue Guns makes accurate polymer-molded models of firearms that are frequently used for training purposes. While most people think of handgun facsimiles when they think of "Blue Guns," the company also makes a wide variety of long guns. Many of them, like the flat-top M4s, have optics rails just like the real thing, making it easy to attach a scope with a mount on it so a customer can check out the eye relief and actually bring the optic to their shoulder and aim through it while, say, trying out the throw lever.

Even Blue Gun models that don't come with a rail in the mold can be easily outfitted with one. Just take a rail segment and use self-tapping screws to bolt it right into the poly-

mer of the Blue Gun receiver in the proper place. After all, it doesn't have to hold up to recoil. Just make sure you use screws that are long enough so you get a secure fit.

Or, consider airsoft guns — the kind that are licensed by gun manufacturers and look and operate like the real thing, not the knockoffs made from clear plastic. They're relatively inexpensive, and most come with standard Pic rails for optics. Many handgun models, like SIG Sauer's airsoft version of the P320, even come with slides milled for real micro red-dot mounting plates. That's a great and safe way to show off those optics.

I'm not exactly sure where vendors get those stocks with fake receivers and rails that they use to show off scopes at SHOT Show and NRAAM, but maybe look into



those, too. If that's the way scope companies show off their newest and best products to the shooting and hunting world, it should work on your sales floor just as well.

Another option is creating your own dummy long gun for in-store optics testing out of spare parts, if you happen to have some around. Important note though: Should you create a dummy long gun, it could still be seen by ATF as a firearm and should therefore be treated appropriately and not simply left out as a display. It's also a wise move to consult with your local ATF office for guidance on doing it right, and get it in writing while you're at it. Additionally, keep in mind that going this route may require you or your staff to mount scopes on such "testers" upon request. That's a great service, but having a few blue gun displays with top sellers pre-mounted might be the way to go anyway. For an MSR, you'd need a stripped upper with a rail, a stripped lower, pistol grip, buffer

trigger, even remove the barrel and there's your optics dummy gun.

A barrel-less receiver will allow customers to point the scope wherever they wish without feeling like they're muzzling someone while still allowing them to check out the eye relief and feel of the scope.

if they're a newbie, turn the turrets a bit and use three rounds or so to show them how to zero the scope they're hopefully going to walk out with in a bag a few minutes later.

If you feel comfortable and have a good relationship with a customer, consider allowing them to bring the

gun at home can lead to a particularly bad case of buyer's remorse. That is not good for repeat business.

Satisfaction in an optic at purchase that is matched by satisfaction with the optic on a customer's gun will lead to a more positive experience when setting up the rifle, a bet-



tube and a stock. These days, that's a lot of inventory to sacrifice for this purpose, but in normal times it isn't, and every so often you end up with a damaged upper or lower that can serve a purpose.

If you get a used, gnarly or just plain beat-up shotgun or rifle that really isn't worth the work or expense to refurbish, break it down for parts. Take out the bolt, remove the

Allow Customers to Range-Test Optics

Range operators, of course, have more effective options. If there's a specific scope and rifle combination that works well and sells well, have that gun and optic set up as a rental. Be sure it's zeroed. This goes for all optics, including red dots.

Nothing inspires confidence in an optic purchase like a range test. And

← Allowing customers to handle and peer through scopes gives your shop a tremendous advantage over online retailers.

firearm that's in need of an optic to the range and use it to take the test models for a spin. If a customer knows they can shoot with a scope at your range, they'll do their browsing online and likely come to you for the test drive and purchase.

What it comes down to is the confidence a customer feels when they make their purchase. After all, a quality scope is a big-ticket item for most people, and disappointment in an optic that isn't quite what they hoped for when they get it on their

ter first range session zeroing it in, and, hopefully, more shooting and more frequent range trips, which is good for everyone involved and will help your bottom line.

It's Worth a Try

For those with gun shops and no shooting range, if you decide to add an optics tester rifle to your counter, put a zeroing target somewhere on the wall a decent distance away, if your space allows for it. It's something for the customer to focus the scope on that is away from customers, and you can also give newbies a quick lesson in how to use such a target to zero their scope at the range later. **HR**



BY GORDY KRAHN

HUNTING RETAILER NEW PRODUCTS



DULUTH PACK WEEKENDER DUFFEL

The Duluth Pack Weekender duffel is made from 15-ounce canvas with a reinforced handcrafted leather bottom to stand up to years of heavy use. It has two external, zippered side compartments for organization, a top center zipper for easy access to the main compartment, comfortable cotton web shoulder strap and padded haul handle for easy pickup. Ruggedly reimagined in Heritage Tan and stamped in timeless black ink with the signature of Camille Poirier, founder of Duluth Pack in 1882, the Weekender duffel will be the toughest piece of carry-on luggage in the overhead bin or in the back of the hunting truck. Dimensions: 10 inches high x 20 inches wide x 10 inches deep, with a 33-liter capacity. **MSRP: \$315** www.duluthpack.com

BUSHNELL CELLUCORE 30 TRAIL CAMERA

Finally, a high-performance cellular trail camera that's easy on the wallet. The CelluCore cellular trail camera from Bushnell is feature-rich and easy to use. It connects, receives and sorts high-quality images quickly and holds up to heavy use with rugged reliability season after season. Users will get clear day and night photos sent right to their devices, plus long battery life and simple setup. Features include 30MP photos and high-definition 1080p video with audio, 0.2-second trigger speed, high-output IR LEDs for better night range, 12 AA removable battery tray and weather data image tagging. Available in two models: A30 (ATT) and V30 (Verison). **MSRP: \$249.99** www.bushnell.com



ADCO SUPER THUMB SPEEDLOADER

For less than 12 bucks, high-volume shooters can save a lot of wear and tear on their thumbs from pushing bullet after bullet into tight-fitting magazines during a long day at the range. The ADCO Super Thumb is a handy pocket-size speedloader designed to make easy work of loading centerfire pistol magazines – allowing shooters to reload without having to press their thumb down on the magazine each time. And it comes in six models designed to work with a wide range of handguns. The Super Thumb won't load the magazine, but it will make it easier and save a lot of time, too. **MSRP: \$10.95** www.adcosales.com

FOXPRO X-DECAY

The X-Decoy from Foxpro turns its X-Series game callers into all-inclusive and portable predator-calling machines. Attach the decoy to the top of the e-caller (must use as a stand-alone if using with the XWAVE) and connect it using the supplied auxiliary cable or wireless IR port connection (IR only available in later X-Series models). The X-Decoy can also be used with other Foxpro callers with an auxiliary jack as a stand-alone decoy. It comes with a removable stake, Fuzzy Wuzzy topper, XHD speaker mounting hinge and Allen wrench and has a whisper quiet motor and Jacked Up Chaotic Motion for great action and realism. The X-Decoy has a three-position switch that features two-speed selectable motion and is powered by four AA batteries (not included). **MSRP: \$98.95** www.gofoxpro.com



CHRISTENSEN ARMS RIDGELINE SCOUT RIFLE

Christensen Arms' new Ridgeline Scout rifle was created for situations that require a light-weight, compact firearm – such as hunting from a ground blind or treestand or for use as a truck gun. This purpose-built, bolt-action rifle combines all the best attributes of the Ridgeline into a compact scout rifle. Specialized features include a black-nitride-coated action, 0-MOA optic rail, barricade stop, 10-round AICS drop-box magazine and flat-shoe Trigger Tech trigger, all on a tan and black carbon fiber composite Sporter stock. Weighing just 5.9 pounds, the Ridgeline Scout is available in four calibers – .300 BLK, .223 Rem., 6.5 Creedmoor and .308 Win. – all with a 16-inch muzzle-threaded barrel that creates an ideal suppressor host. **MSRP: \$2,199.99** www.christensenarms.com

WALKER'S ATACS SPORT EARBUDS

Walker's Game Ears' ATACS Sport earbuds deliver the state-of-the-art performance serious shooters demand in a platform designed to excel in all-day comfort and operational convenience by incorporating a dual retention system into a sophisticated and ergonomic platform. ATACS Sport earbuds also include the latest in sound suppression/enhancement technology and operational control. Bluetooth 5.0 connectivity, for example, pairs the ATACS Sport earbuds to the user's phone via the Walker's LINK 2.0 app, providing remote control of the listening mode settings. ATACS Sport earbuds come with three different-size foam ear tips and a USB-C charging cable to deliver up to 7.5 hours of battery life per charge. **MSRP: \$129.99** www.walkersgameear.com





GERMAN PRECISION OPTICS SPECTRA 7.5X50I RIFLESCOPE

German Precision Optics (GPO) has entered the fixed-power scope market with the introduction of its new Spectra 7.5x50i, a slim and sleek optic that offers simplicity to shooters who do not need a variable-power scope. It features a 50mm double HD objective lens system for enhanced resolution coupled with GPObright high transmission lens coatings. A 30mm main tube maximizes optical performance while supporting incremental elevation adjustment capabilities. It is crafted from a solid one-piece dust-proof, waterproof, nitrogen-filled body for strength and durability. An illuminated general use G4i reticle powered by the GPO iCONTROL illumination system assists shooters in low-light conditions. Custom designed turrets are made to easily reset to the zero-indicator mark on the scope body. **Retail: \$599.99** www.gpo-usa.com



GALCO SCOPED RIFLE/SHOTGUN CASE

The Field Grade Zippered Scoped Rifle/Shotgun firearms case from Galco is constructed of khaki cotton duck fabric, lined with acrylic fleece and trimmed with dark Havana leather. All hardware is solid brass (except the zipper, which is nylon to avoid scratching wood stocks) and the adjustable carry handle/shoulder strap is constructed of leather. The case is water resistant and very functional in the field, with a spacious exterior pocket for ammunition, eye and ear protection or other essential gear. It's available in three sizes to fit guns from 40 to 48 inches in length. Note: This case does not fit rifles/shotguns with pistol grips. **MSRP: \$159/All sizes** www.galcogunleather.com



HAWKE OPTICS SPOTTING SCOPE WINDOW MOUNT

Hunters can save considerable time and energy by letting their optics do the lion's share of the "walking." Hawke Optics' easy-to-use window mount works with a wide range of spotting scopes (and other optics with a standard mounting socket) and allows hunters to size up game from the comfort of their vehicle – providing a perfect blend of easy setup and adjustability. It takes just seconds to attach the foam-padded clamp jaw to the window, locate game and adjust the spotting scope to the right angle and determine if this really is Mr. Big. **MSRP: \$27** www.hawkeoptics.com

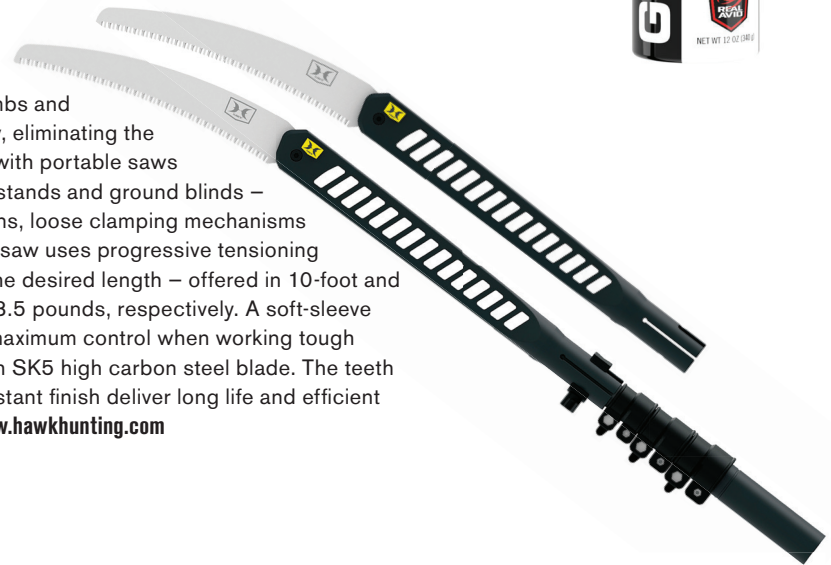
REAL AVID GUN-MAX GUN OIL

Gun-Max's advanced gun-metal grade formula from Real Avid sets a new standard for protecting, lubricating and cleaning modern guns. Powerful inhibitors displace moisture to deliver extended corrosion protection. Advanced anti-friction additives bond to metal surfaces for longer-lasting lubrication of moving metal parts, maximizing performance of semi-auto guns with high cycle rates. Formulated to excel in sub-zero temperatures and harsh operating conditions, Gun-Max is available in 12-ounce aerosol and 4-ounce bottles and contains potent inhibitors that displace moisture to deliver extended corrosion protection. This new gun oil is also chemically engineered with advanced anti-friction additives that bond to metal surfaces and perform better under friction, providing longer-lasting lubrication of moving metal parts. **MSRP: \$12.99/12-ounce aerosol can; \$8.99/4-ounce liquid bottle** www.realavid.com



HAWK HELIUM POLE SAW

Hawk has developed a durable solution for trimming those hard-to-reach limbs and branches with the new Helium pole saw, eliminating the problems hunters have historically had with portable saws intended for clearing brush around treestands and ground blinds – specifically, flimsy telescoping extensions, loose clamping mechanisms and weak saw blades. The Helium pole saw uses progressive tensioning clamps to secure the pole sections at the desired length – offered in 10-foot and 14-foot versions and weighing 2.5 and 3.5 pounds, respectively. A soft-sleeve grip provides a positive purchase and maximum control when working tough branches. Topping the saw is an 11-inch SK5 high carbon steel blade. The teeth design and black nitride, corrosion-resistant finish deliver long life and efficient cutting power. **MSRP: \$99.99-\$129.99** www.hawkhunting.com



WOOX RUGER 10/22 RIFLE STOCKS AND CHASSIS

American-Italian rifle stock manufacturer Woon has expanded its extensive rifle stock and chassis line to include the popular Ruger 10/22. Woon rifle stocks and chassis have a reputation for the highest quality of handmade Italian craftsmanship, coupled with American design and dependable accuracy. In addition to the new Ruger 10/22 models, Woon stocks and chassis are compatible with Remington 700, Savage 110, Tikka T3/T3x, Sauer 100, Howa 1500 and Weatherby Vanguard actions. Woon is a division of Minelli Group, with its North American headquarters situated in Hickory, North Carolina. All Woon products are developed in the USA and manufactured in Italy. **MSRP: Starting at \$559** www.wooxstore.com



Funding the Future

BY BOB ROBB

By now, hopefully you've helped make your customers aware of who foots the tab for the majority of conservation efforts in the U.S. It's them, via contributions made through the 11 percent excise tax on purchases of long guns and ammo, and 10 percent on handguns, via the Pittman-Robertson Act, the 10 percent tax on sport fishing and boating equipment via the Dingell-Johnson Act., and the efforts of many hunting-focused conservation organizations like SCI, RMEF, DU, NWTf, MDF, etc.

The rub here is twofold. The number of hunters in America is stagnant and actually declining as a percentage of the overall population when you figure in annual population growth. At the same time, demand for use of our precious outdoor resources is growing by leaps and bounds. Not by hunters and anglers, but by hikers, campers, birdwatchers, etc. As evidence, one needs look no further than at the demand for camping space in our national and state parks, which in many instances are booked up many months in advance.

While you'll not find anyone who believes more than me that our government agencies are, by and large, bloated money pits, the truth is that our wildlife and natural resources need funding in order to survive and thrive. For decades, many of us have asked a simple question: When will non-consumptive users step up to the plate and pay their fair share?

I recently read a study published in July 2021 in *Conservation and Science Practice* entitled, "The Future of Wildlife Conservation Funding: What Options Do U.S. College Students Support?" In a nutshell, what the report says is that, while the surveyed students wholeheartedly support conservation funding — and many creative new ways to fund it — they oppose the same sort of excise taxes on backpacks, camping

equipment, binoculars and so on, that hunters and anglers have supported on the gear they use since 1937 (P-R Act) and 1950 (D-J Act.) In other words, let somebody else pay for it.

Who would that be? The students surveyed strongly support taxing resource extraction companies and outdoor recreation outfitters, tapping state lottery proceeds, passing state and local bonds, and state sales tax increases, as well as continuing funding from hunting and fishing license sales and Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson excise taxes.

This is troubling to me. At the same time, state game departments realize they need future sources of increased funding. For them, the easiest way to get more money is to increase hunting (and, to a lesser extent, fishing) license and tag costs — especially those charged to non-residents. For example, last March Massachusetts proposed a 56 percent increase in the cost of a resident fishing license (\$40 from \$22.50), and the cost of the necessary licenses and permits to hunt bear, turkey, pheasant, waterfowl, small game and deer (including archery and muzzleloader seasons) would climb almost four times, from \$47.70 to \$160. Non-resident license and permit fees were also slated to go up sharply. It would be the first increase in 25 years, but still. Louisiana, Mississippi and Arkansas also proposed increases, primarily on nonresidents.

Out West, where expensive non-resident license and tag fees have already priced many out of the game, Wyoming's 2021 proposed

bill SF0103 asked for huge increases in nonresident license and tag fees while capping all tags issued to non-resident hunters at 10 percent. The proposed increases were on antelope (\$324 to \$600, 85%), deer (\$372-\$655, 76%), and elk (\$690-\$1,100, 59.5%). Thankfully, the bill failed to emerge from the senate Travel, Recreation and Wildlife committee by a vote of 1-4. In 2019, Washington state increased its hunting license fees. The list goes on.

The question is, of course, how will conservation be funded in the future? There's little question that the environment and wildlife are important to America's youth, and that's a good thing. And seeking non-traditional means of funding is also a good thing. But we simply cannot keep increasing the burden on hunters and anglers while other user groups get a pass. As hunter numbers decrease over time, as they will, the amount of money generated by license and tag fees will fall far short of the funds required, no matter how much states keep soaking the nonresidents — who, by the way, already pay for well over half of most all western state game department budgets. Continuing to jack up these costs will continue to drive Joe Lunchbucket out of the game altogether as well. Do we really want hunting in the U.S. to become a game primarily reserved for the wealthy?

Game departments are combatting hunter decline with the R3 — Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation — initiative to try and get more

new hunters into the woods and keep them there, while encouraging older hunters who may have given the game up to get back in the field. Youth-only hunts are another way game departments attempt to create life-long excitement in future hunters, though to be truthful, whether or not they do that on any meaningful scale is debatable.

Still, at some point alternative funding sources will be required. As this survey shows, America's youth — the future leaders of our country — support funding conservation efforts, but not if they have to step up and pay for it themselves. How can you help change this attitude? One way is to encourage young customers to join a true conservation organization like those listed earlier, not a pseudo animal rights group that does nothing but line their own pockets like HSUS, PETA and World Wildlife Fund. Another is to ask them to buy a duck stamp, even if they don't hunt.

But this attitude of "somebody else but me pays" must change. Both the P-R and D-J acts were enacted at the express request of hunters and anglers, who told congress they wanted to be taxed, as long as the funds were used expressly for conservation. Isn't it time the now-aging millennials and Gen Z'ers stepped to the plate, leading the way to a bright future for America's wild places and wildlife, with their wallets, and not just their mouths?

What's your take? Drop me a note at editor@grandviewoutdoors.com. I'd love to hear your thoughts. **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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