

HUNTING

R A I L E R



May/June 2022 | On Target

10 MUST-SEE
NEW
SHOTGUNS

**BIG-
BORE**
AIR
RIFLES
Three Hot
Models

**THE
MODERN
30-30**



FLASH FORGED TECHNOLOGY

Is Available Exclusively on Select
Christensen Arms Firearms

Found on page 5

THE LATEST IN

CARBON FIBER

MANUFACTURING

TO STOCK OR NOT:
HOT NEW CHAMBERINGS

A GUIDE TO GROWING YOUR
CUSTOMER BASE

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RETAILER



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America's Gunsmith Shop Under New Ownership; Offers Nationwide Service

What started as the central gunsmith service center for the fledgling Gander Mountain operations, in 1979, eventually supporting more than 130 gunsmith operations across the country, will be further spreading its wings under new owner, Roy Christensen.

Now recognized as America's Gunsmith Shop, it was most recently a division of Camping World, after its acquisition of Gander Mountain in 2017. Christensen, the long-time manager of the operation, seized the opportunity to purchase the gunsmith arm of Camping World after

he was informed in August 2021 that America's Gunsmith Shop would be liquidated and closed.

The gunsmith team at America's Gunsmith Shop has nearly 100 years of combined experience within the trade. From basic to advanced firearm repair, custom trigger work, adjustable combs and buttplates, choke tube installation, all the way to more intricate services like bluing, hydro-dipping, Cerakote ceramic gun coatings, even laser engraving, America's Gunsmith Shop is a complete source for comprehensive gunsmith services, available to cus-

tomers nationwide.

Their process could not be simpler: After a personal call to discuss the customer's specific needs, America's Gunsmith Shop will ship a sturdy, protective box to the customer's door. The customer simply seals the gun in the provided box, applies the supplied mailing label, and the gun is shipped directly to their facility. Upon receipt, the needed services are conducted onsite and upon completion, the firearm is shipped safely back to the customer.

But America's Gunsmith Shop offers services beyond the individual

customer; they are the extended gunsmithing "arm" of gun shops and sporting goods stores around the country. These stores, who may not have an onsite gunsmith, can now offer their local customers full gunsmith services through America's Gunsmith Shop. As a result, Christensen's network is continually expanding thanks to the growing number of participating dealers.

To learn more about the full line of gunsmith services offered by America's Gunsmith Shop, visit www.americasgunsmithshop.com or call (866) 862-4570.

Osborn Takes Marketing Director Role at Taurus

Taurus, manufacturer of handguns for defense, hunting and sport shooting, is excited to announce the hiring of Cody Osborn as marketing director for the Taurus, Rossi, and Heritage Manufacturing brands.

Osborn comes to his new position from Walther, where he held the responsibility of marketing manager. A BA and MA graduate of Texas A&M University and a USPSA and IDPA competitor, Osborn served three years on the Walther Pro Team in addition to his managerial work, where he oversaw several key initiatives, including the Walther Defense Division, PDP launch, and the Q5 Match Steel Frame launch.

In his new role as Taurus, Rossi, and Heritage Mfg. marketing director,

Osborn will be responsible for defining and implementing yearly marketing plans, new product launches, public relations, product development and advertising.

"I want everyone to be able to own a firearm and to participate in the shooting and hunting lifestyle," Osborn said. "With that goal in mind, I look forward to helping guide these brands to establish a more personal interaction with their enthusiasts and to introducing everyone interested in firearms to the potential these brands can offer."

For more information, go to taurususa.com.

ATA Weighs In on the "America the Beautiful" Initiative

The Archery Trade Association and 44 other members of the Hunt Fish 30x30 Coalition recently submitted formal comments to the Federal Register regarding the American Conservation and Stewardship Atlas, a key component of the Biden Administration's "America the Beautiful" Initiative, also referred to as "30x30." The recommendations urge the Administration to identify the lands and waters considered to be "conserved" based on conservation outcomes rather than arbitrary criteria. The groups also highlight the importance of working with entities such as state fish

and wildlife management agencies, regional fish and wildlife management authorities, tribes, conservation focused NGOs and private landowners who are most knowledgeable and best equipped to advance pragmatic and successful conservation efforts throughout the United States.

"There are tremendous variable benefits associated with 'conservation' lands across this country," said Dan Forster, ATA vice president and chief conservation officer. "ATA's direct involvement with this initiative, as well as that of the other coalition members, is to

ensure that active management and recreational opportunities that include hunting are not only allowed but prioritized in these expansion efforts.

"Conservation lands not only provide the foundation for quality of life attributes for all Americans but also provide wildlife and associated recreational benefits like bowhunting opportunities that are critical for our industry, customers and the recreational economy that fuels much of rural America.

The ATA and other organizations believe that for America the Beautiful to be successful, the following

fundamental elements must be included in any "30x30" policy:

- Clearly defining "conservation" to support the active management and sustainable use of our nation's public trust fish and wildlife resources.

- Collaborating closely with entities devoted to achieving measurable biodiversity conservation objectives

- Recognizing and including all efforts directly contributing to biodiversity conservation in the forthcoming American Conservation and Stewardship Atlas, including those on lands managed for multiple uses. **HR**





INTRODUCING THE NEW CHRISTENSEN ARMS RIDGELINE FFT RIFLE



Over the past 25 years, Christensen Arms has consistently been at the forefront of firearm innovation and wildlife conservation efforts. From the introduction of the carbon-fiber wrapped barrel to financial support of leading wildlife conservation groups, Christensen Arms is always finding new ways to improve the shooter's experience while protecting our beloved hobbies and traditions.

For 2022, the newest innovation from Christensen Arms is Flash Forged Technology (FFT) which represents the latest in carbon fiber structural manufacturing. Instead of maintaining the status quo of "overbuilding" a product to meet safety standards, Flash Forged Technology employs an engineering approach to achieve the lightest possible structure while exceeding crucial strength and safety margins.

The new Ridgeline FFT utilizes the latest in carbon fiber manufacturing, making it up to a full pound lighter while introducing additional features such as an FFT carbon fiber floor plate and bolt knob. The new side-baffle brake and stylish paint scheme distinguish the new model even

further, all while retaining the Christensen Arms Sub-MOA Guarantee.

The rifle weight starts at 5.3 lbs. depending on model and chambering. Color options include: stainless action with black and gray stock; burnt bronze Cerakote action with green, black, and tan stock. Magazine capacity: internal, 4 rd. standard, 5 rd. magnum.

Chamberings available: 450 Bushmaster, 22-250 Rem, 243 Rem, 6.5 CRDMR, 6.5 PRC, 6.5-284 Norma, 26 Nosler, 270 Win, 7mm-08 Rem, 280 Ack, 28 Nosler, 7mm Rem Mag,

308 Win, 300 Win, 30-06 Springfield, 30 Nosler, 300 WSM, 300 Win Mag, 300 PRC and 300 RUM. MSRP starts at \$2,399.99.

PUTTING THE FUTURE OF COMPOSITES IN PRACTICE:

Utilizing an aerospace monocoque shell, Flash Forged Technology eliminates unnecessary internal weight. The result is a FFT designed stock that is up to a full pound lighter than traditionally manufactured carbon fiber composite rifle stocks – creating a more consistent shooting foundation

while reducing user fatigue in the field. Flash Forged Technology is available exclusively on select Christensen Arms firearms.

TECHNOLOGY THAT SUPPORTS WILDLIFE CONSERVATION:

With conservation being at the forefront, Flash Forged Technology also results in greater environmental sustainability as it was created to save energy and eliminate waste. Utilizing automated processes and virgin recyclable materials, FFT is truly 100% zero-waste manufacturing. Trimmed composites are repurposed into new carbon fiber parts without producing harmful toxins or emissions. This new technology helps support Christensen Arms goal of wildlife conservation by reducing our environmental impact and protecting our lands and wildlife for the enjoyment of future generations – all while creating a superior product.

Flash Forged Technology is available exclusively on select Christensen Arms firearms for 2022: the Mesa FFT, Mesa FFT Titanium, Ridgeline FFT, Ridgeline FFT Titanium and Ridgeline FFT Scout.



How to Halt the Turnover of Your Top Talent

Rather than use exit interviews to glean insights from departing employees, consider taking a more proactive approach with 'stay' interviews.

BY KEN WYSOCKY

Exit interviews are often used to find out why departing employees flew the coop. Business professor John Sullivan proposes a better strategy: Determine the reasons why key employees stay at your organization and reinforce those factors whenever and wherever possible.

But how can employers determine what keeps key employees happily moored? Sullivan recommends what he calls "stay" interviews, in which managers periodically sit down with top-performing employees and ask key questions to suss out the fundamental reasons why they like their jobs.

"It's too late if you're asking people why they're leaving," says Sullivan, a professor of management at San Francisco State University.

"You have to ask them before they leave — ask them why they stay, then reinforce those things. Then they'll never leave."

The concept isn't exactly new. Sullivan — who has written more than 1,200 articles and 10 books about talent management, including the book *Stay Interviews and Other Powerful Retention Tools* — says he invented the concept back in the late 1990s. But given the problems so many companies have with high employee turnover, it's easy to imagine that not enough organizations use this commonsense solution.

There aren't any major obstacles to doing such interviews. They don't cost anything but managers' time, and they don't require any special training, either, because the process is both simple and intuitive. Further-

more, the cost of employee turnover is staggering. Estimates about these costs vary widely, but based on his own research, Sullivan says the number is at least three times an employee's salary.

There's another compelling reason for busy managers to make time for stay interviews: Because the program targets only a small population of specific employees, it's easy to track turnover metrics to determine its effectiveness, Sullivan says.

Start the Conversation

So what exactly is a stay interview and how should it be conducted? Sullivan defines it as a structured, one-on-one retention interview between a manager and a top-performing employee. It can also target crucial employees who are high



risks for departure.

The interview should last about an hour. The primary goal is to identify the factors that drive employees to stay, as well as identify and minimize factors that could spur their departure. Such interviews should be scheduled at least twice a year and more often for top employees identified as flight risks, Sullivan says.

“If job circumstances change for an employee, you may have to do the interviews more often,” he says. “Volatility matters if it changes employees’ ‘sticky’ factors — the things that make a difference to them and keep them on board.”

The repeated emphasis on top-

personnel. To reduce any anxiety, the manager should begin by pointing out that the interview’s purpose is simply to identify things that keep the employee jazzed about his or her job.

Then the manager should quickly segue into praising the employee’s performance, thanking the employee for his or her efforts and emphasizing the value that person brings to the organization. Then it’s time to get to the meat of the matter: Find out what trips this employee’s trigger about their job.

Questions can vary, but here are some examples:

- What factors make you passion-

“The goal is to identify the factors that drive employees to stay, as well as identify and minimize factors that could spur departure.”

performing and key employees here is no accident; this isn’t a politically correct kids’ soccer tournament where everyone gets a trophy. In short, low-performing employees don’t get to participate. Odds are that they’re less likely to be lured away anyway, Sullivan says.

“It’s all about job performance and replaceability,” he says.

There’s a big difference between a lower-level employee who might cost the organization \$100 by making a mistake versus a high-level employee whose error could cost it millions of dollars — or whose innovation skills could lead to millions of dollars in additional revenue.

What if non-key employees learn that colleagues are getting stay interviews and ask why they aren’t? Candor is critical.

“Most managers will lie,” Sullivan says. “But it’s better to hold a meeting and talk to them about their performance and contributions to the organization. Point out that when they perform like the people who get stay interviews, they’ll get one, too.”

Sticky Factors

Managers typically should do the interviews, not human resources

ate about and committed to your team?

- What three or four key reasons keep you here?
- What factors make you feel like you’re having a positive impact on your team, customers or community?
- Are there any “wow” factors that keep you excited about your role here?

• What are your career expectations and where would you like to be, say, two years from now?

• What would your dream job be like?

• Is there anything more I can do to enhance your productivity and commitment to your job?

It’s important to focus on positives, not things employees don’t like about their jobs.

“They key is to identify those sticky factors — get it all on the table,” Sullivan says. “A lot of managers have no idea what motivates their employees. It’s horrible. If you don’t know what motivates them, how can you try to retain them?”

Sometimes the responses spur more interviews. For example, some top employees might list a particular colleague (or colleagues) as a chief



reason why they enjoy their jobs. In those instances, it’s important to also do a stay interview with that colleague or colleagues, Sullivan says.

Action Is Critical

Of course, stay interviews become an empty exercise if a manager doesn’t act on the information provided. Any delays in reinforcing the sticky factors, or not doing anything at all, increases the chances a quality employee will leave.

In addition, some issues inevitably arise that managers can’t resolve on their own. In those cases, it’s important for managers to be candid and explain that they must first consult with upper management before taking action. But they should get back to employees with answers in a

↑ It’s important to note that stay interviews are only for top performers. Low-performing employees don’t get to participate — they’re less likely to be lured away anyhow.

reasonable amount of time, such as a couple weeks, Sullivan says.

The bottom line: Stay interviews are an inexpensive and effective tool for keeping top talent firmly anchored.

“They make people feel appreciated,” Sullivan says. “You only need to look at the data to see that stay interviews work. Research shows that 50% of turnover is preventable and 95% of it is predictable. So if I can stop you from quitting half the time, there’s no reason not to do so.” **HR**



Big-Bore Air Rifles

Today's air rifles are capable of taking some of the biggest game on the planet, and your customers will want to know about these three models.



BY MARK CHESNUT

It wasn't very long ago that if people heard the term "air rifle," most probably thought of a pellet gun they played with as a child, or maybe that much-coveted Red Ryder BB gun with a compass in the stock that Ralphie got as a gift in the movie *A Christmas Story*. How things have changed!

Modern air rifles are far from the child's "toy" of yesteryear — much sleeker, far more powerful and

packed with performance features previously only available in a true firearm. In fact, many companies now make big-bore air rifles that can be used to effectively hunt deer-sized game and larger, as well as coyotes and other four-legged critters.

In fact, according to Justin Biddle, vice president of marketing at air gun maker Umarex, 2022 should be referred to as The Year of the Air

Gun Hunter.

"That's due to the fact that never before have there been so many air guns made for the hunt," Biddle said. "Umarex alone has introduced six air guns that range from .22 caliber to 20-gauge and span the gamut of small game to big game."

Don't think, however, these rifles shoot those old-fashioned pellets that you used to shoot with your old Crosman that took 10 pumps

to reach decent velocity. Big-bore air gun hunters use high-tech cast projectiles that are quite heavy compared to a conventional pellet. If you choose to get into this game, plan on stocking some hunting projectiles along with rifles.

Now, let's take a look at a few big-bore air rifles that hunting retailers might want to consider carrying in their inventory.





BENJAMIN BULLDOG .457

Benjamin Airguns' new Bulldog .457 is the company's largest-bore PCP air rifle. Based on the proven Bulldog platform, the Bulldog .457 kicks it up a few notches to give big-game hunters the stopping power they're looking for. It delivers up to 450 ft./lbs. of energy (fpe), which is more than twice the energy of the Bulldog .357.

It's powerful and compact, capable of taking big game with smaller projec-

tiles and with a max fill pressure of 3,000 psi. A larger 440cc reservoir gives hunters a minimum of two shots with stopping power of over 400 fpe. The Bulldog .457 can hold up to three rounds at once, and it loads easily thanks to a drop-in shot tray. The muzzle is threaded to allow hunters to add an aftermarket suppressor if desired.

The Benjamin Bulldog .457 carries an MSRP of \$1099.99.



UMAREX HAMMER

This .50-caliber model might just be the most popular big-bore hunting air rifle on the market today. And there are good reasons for that: It is powerful, accurate and easy to operate, while also coming in at a very attractive price point.

In the power category, it is capable of shooting a 550-grain slug to generate over 700 ft./lbs. of energy. Most hunters use a 320- or 350-grain slug generating nearly 600 fpe. It has a two-round magazine that auto indexes when you operate the bolt and has taken everything from wild hogs to American bison and even Cape buffalo. The Hammer holds 4,500 psi of air in its 24-cubic-inch air tank, which is good for three shots.

According to Umarex, the high level of energy and three full-power shots delivered by the Hammer is achieved through its proprietary, patent-pending Lightspeed valve. The innovative engineering used to design this internal mechanism coupled with a .510-caliber, 550-grain lead slug is the recipe for making over 700 fpe at the muzzle. Almost as impressive, it only takes about

two pounds of effort to operate its straight-pull bolt. This short, effortless action is all it takes to cock the rifle and advance the magazine to the next shot.

As far as appearance, this air rifle looks like something straight out of the future. The stock is made from Nymax, an advanced polymer that withstands the rugged trials of outdoor hunting and shooting, and Umarex uses the familiar Magpul MOE grip. The air rifle's 43.75-inch overall length is far shorter than one might expect with a 29.5-inch barrel length with full-length composite shroud. To make it easy for the user to add optics and accessories, Umarex includes an 8.5-inch Picatinny rail on top with 20 slots, along with three M-Lok-compatible slots in the forearm. MSRP for the Umarex Hammer is \$899.



GAMO TC45 AND TC35

The Gamo TC45 is made primarily for hunting and flings projectiles down-range with plenty of killing energy.

Weighing in at 8.7 pounds, this air rifle has a 24.25-inch barrel that looks even longer. Overall length is 49.5 inches, so tiny it isn't. Powered by a pre-charged pneumatic pump (PNP), it can launch pellets at velocities up to 900 fps and do so without making a whole lot of noise, thanks to the integrated sound suppressor on the end of the metal-jacketed rifled steel barrel.

The TC45 is a single-shot air rifle, so extremely quick follow-up shots aren't necessarily easy. But with its adjustable two-stage trigger, which comes from the factory set at about 3.5 pounds, hunters can tailor it just the way they want and feel confident that when they squeeze off a shot, a second one likely won't

be needed. The TC45 also features a tactical rail for mounting optics and an ergonomic tactical stock for getting a good cheek weld before taking a shot.

This rifle is also available in a .35-caliber version with many of the same features. A smaller rifle, it measures 39 inches long and weighs in at only 6 pounds. It sends a 190-grain pellet at about 1,000 fps, yielding about 170 fpe. Interestingly, this rifle can deliver up to 30 to 40 shots on low power, while still delivering exceptional energy and consistency. In the end, the TC35 is a versatile big-bore air rifle capable of taking a wide range of medium-sized game, varmints and predators, as well as great fun on the range.

MSRP for both the Gamo TC45 and TC35 is \$900. **HR**





Gauge These 10 New Shotguns for Increased Sales

Shotguns are always hot sellers, but these 10 new models will fly off the shelves in 2022.

BY KEVIN REESE

Hunting birds with firearms isn't necessarily new; in fact, historians trace it back to early in the 17th century. A number of accounts of bird hunting with firearms of the day date back to the first half of the 1600s, with "fowling pieces" dating clear back to the latter half of the same century. More modern firearms, including shotguns as we understand them, began to emerge at the end of the 1700s, namely flintlock shotguns complete with Damascus barrels. Soon after, innovation and product development led to even more instantaneous firing systems. By the end of the 1800s, pump-action shotguns had entered production with major manufacturers, with Winchester rising as a major contributor to shotgun innovation, especially with the Model 1897 and the iconic Model 1912.

With such rich scattergun hunting history stretching over roughly 250

years, it's no wonder enthusiasts continue to pursue the tradition-rich connection shotgunning holds with our heritage. In many states and within the hearts of countless hunters from coast to coast, shotgun hunting for turkeys, waterfowl, upland game and even big game with shotgun slugs is as much a component of our hunting heritage and acquisition of table fare as giving chase with rifles, bows and muzzleloaders. Shotguns certainly hold their own with respect to hunting, and most avid hunters own at least one or are looking for that one they simply can't walk away from. This simple truth can be a boon for retailers. Thus, offering a solid assortment of shotguns certainly can increase sales. Of course, deciding what to carry can be a daunting task. Here are 10 shotguns worth gauging for increased customer traffic and sales.





WINCHESTER SX4 UNIVERSAL HUNTER

While Winchester grew legs in 1866 with the iconic lever-action rifles we know and love today, including the Gun that Won the West – the Model 1873 – the company continues its American tradition of producing innovative handguns, rifles and shotguns; case in point, 2022 Winchester SX4 Universal Hunter Shotgun.

Winchester's new-for-2022 SX4 Universal Hunter in Mossy Oak DNA camouflage, chambered in 20-gauge and 12-gauge, features a chrome-plated, 3½-inch

chamber; semi-automatic active-valve gas system; steel barrel; composite stock; drop-out trigger; ambidextrous drop-bolt safety; Inflex 1 recoil pad; length-of-pull spacers and Invector chokes. The SX4 comes ready for the hunt; however, waterfowlers should note the SX4's 4+1 shell capacity and use a plug accordingly.

www.winchesterguns.com



BROWNING MAXUS II WICKED WING

It would be a discredit to this shortlist of ultra-popular shotguns to ignore models I have used for epic adventures over the past two seasons, the Browning Maxus II Wicked Wing counted among them. The only shotgun I ever regretted selling was my original Browning Maxus 12-gauge model. It was light, comfortable and the fastest-shooting shotgun I had owned. Last year, I set out to reclaim my Maxus experiences; however, I could no longer find one available – people simply refused to let them go, at least for a reasonable price. My search finally led me to the Browning Maxus II Wicked Wing, and I am so glad it did!

Like its predecessor, but better, the Browning Maxus II Wicked Wing offers your customers an ultra-comfortable, ridiculously reliable, lightning-quick shooting experience over long, active hunts, season after season. The gas-operated,

autoloading Browning Maxus II Wicked Wing shotgun boasts a Power Drive gas system; burnt-bronze Cerakote finish on the receiver and barrel; composite stock with black or camouflage finish – my personal model is dressed out in Mossy Oak Bottomland; rubber-overmolded, SoftFlex cheek pad; 1.5-inch Inflex recoil pad; oversized controls; Lightning Trigger with a ramped trigger guard for easier loading; Speed Load Plus patented feeding system; nickel-teflon coated bolt, bolt slide, shell carrier, cocking handle and release button; chrome bore and chamber; steel magazine tube with a Turnkey Magazine Plug and Invector-Plus choke tubes. Your customers are sure to be as giddy as I was after the first shot. This Maxus II Wicked Wing is a keeper. www.browning.com.



RETAY GPS-XL

My first experience with Retay Shotguns took place just last year at the inaugural DUX (Ducks Unlimited Expo) event at Texas Motor Speedway. As they say, the first impression is a lasting one, and I was quite impressed. I was fortunate to send shot downrange with a GPS pump-action model and was happy to see Retay introduce the GPS-XL for 2022. As a newer shotgun manufacturer, headquartered in Turkey, Retay has quickly established itself as a value-focused brand with premium shotgun performance – in my world, a perfect storm.

The GPS-XL incorporates a "short-action" floating-forend pump system for

shorter, faster cycling, rather than the longer traditional tube platform. Additional Retay GPS-XL features include a 28-inch, deep-bore drilled, steel barrel; 3½-inch chamber; lengthened forcing cone; composite stock with black or camouflage finishes; flat rib with fiber-optic sight; aluminum alloy receiver complete with a dovetail groove for easy optic mounting and a shotshell capacity of 4+1, or 3+1 using 3½-inch shells. As a side note, a 24-inch GPS-XL turkey-hunting model is scheduled to release in 2023. www.retayusa.com





MOSSBERG 940 PRO TURKEY

One of my greatest passions is turkey hunting, and it began with a Mossberg pump-action, 12-gauge 835 Ulti-Mag with a 24-inch barrel. All told, I took a number of turkeys and yes, even ducks, with the shorter-barreled turkey gun. Years later, I stepped into a Mossberg 935 Pro and took more turkeys, and scores of ducks. Mossberg ranks among the most popular hunting shotgun producers worldwide. This undebatable fact translates well for customers looking for an affordable, proven shotgun they can trust, and for 2022, Mossberg's 940 Pro Turkey Shotgun emphasizes exactly that for spring hunters.

The 2022 Mossberg 940 Pro Turkey comes stock with all the creature com-

forts die-hard turkey hunters have come to expect, including an 18- or 24-inch VR barrel; 4+1 shell capacity; 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ - to 3-inch chambering; synthetic, textured forend and stock with Mossy Oak Greenleaf camouflage finish, and adjustable length of pull (13 to 14.25 inches); enlarged, beveled loading port; nickel-boron coated gas piston, tube-magazine, hammer and sear; oversized controls and a HiViz CompSight fiber-optic sight. The 940 Pro Turkey Shotgun also is RMSc cut to accept a compact reflex-style optic and includes an X-Factor ported choke tube. www.mossberg.com



WEATHERBY 18i

For as long as I can remember, in our home, Weatherby has been a household name. My grandfather trusted his Weatherbys for decades of hunting and they were passed on to us in the late 70s. Since then, I have hunted with Mark V models, Vanguards and CarbonMark rifles and, recently, I spent a season with Weatherby's latest shotgun offering, the 18i.

The Weatherby 18i Shotgun is a bird hunter's dream, a premium-quality, semi-automatic shotgun built (and proven) to rival the likes of top performers like the Benelli SBE 3 or Browning Maxus II. Weatherby offers the 18i in three

models: 18i Deluxe 12-gauge (pictured) with 26- or 28-inch barrel, walnut stock and laser engraved receiver; Waterfowler (four Mossy Oak and Realtree camouflage patterns) with 28-inch barrel; and Synthetic 12-gauge (black) with 28-inch barrel. Even better, the Weatherby 18i's pricing certainly begins at a more palatable range than many other top hunting shotguns. The 18i features an inertia-driven system, chrome-lined bore, Elastomer butt pad, ventilated top rib, 4+1 capacity (2+1 with the plug); fiber-optic sight and a 3.5-inch chamber. www.weatherby.com



CZ-USA FIELD SPORTS SERIES 1012

Founded in the Czech Republic in 1936, CZ has built a solid reputation around military weaponry and heirloom-quality firearms. A personal favorite in my safe, manufactured here in the United States by CZ-USA, is a Model 3 .300 WSM with a Montana Rifle Company barreled action. It took six months to find a private seller willing to let it go, and I have been pretty giddy about since the day I picked it up. While countless shooting and hunting enthusiasts are familiar with CZ and CZ-USA's pistols and rifles, the company's shotguns also are well worth retail space and range from value-priced premium performance to downright stunning works of art. Fortunately for today's customers, the Field Sports Series 1012 looks great and packs a ton of bang for the buck.

I have been fortunate to hunt waterfowl with the CZ-USA for a couple of seasons now, and its performance has been no less dependable than other shotguns I have used costing more than twice the 1012's price. This suggests that customers looking for exceptional reliability, great aesthetics and a comfortable shooting experience have the 1012 as a truly affordable option. The 1012 is offered in varnished, checkered Turkish walnut or in synthetic versions with black or camouflage finishes. CZ-USA's 1012 boasts gasless inertia operation; 3-inch chamber; 28-inch steel barrel; crossbolt safety and a five-choke set, perfect for multiple hunting applications and all experience levels. www.cz-usa.com



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REMINGTON 870 FIELDMASTER

Remington, now officially RemArms, has certainly endured dramatic changes, yet the brand remains in business, through transitions, and continues hold fast to the quality and reliable values that has kept the company operating, in one form or another, for 205 years. A cornerstone of Remington's success for more than 70 years, with more than 11 million sold, has been the 870. For 2022, Remington has shifted gears from Express models to the FieldMaster, and there is a lot to like.

The Remington 870 FieldMaster pump-action shotgun features a receiver precision-machined from a single block of steel; 28-inch steel barrel; ventilated rib; walnut field-style stock with heirloom-quality laser-checkering, bead front sight; 3-inch chamber and 4+1 capacity (ensure waterfowling customers use plugs). The 870 FieldMaster also includes four chokes, and the receiver is tapped and drilled to accommodate an optic. www.remarms.com



BROWNING SWEET 16 A5 WICKED WING 16-GAUGE

Back are the days of the 16-gauge, often referred to as the "gentleman's gauge" – enter the Browning Sweet 16 A5 Wicked Wing Shotgun. True to the A5 standards serious shotgun hunters have come to love about the platform, the Sweet 16 hits A-grade comfort, reliability and terminal marks between 12- and 20-gauge models. The Sweet 16 Wicked Wing's most notable feature is the A5's famed humpback receiver, designed to lengthen the sight plane and enhance Browning's Kinematic Drive short-recoil autoloading system, a proven action warranted for up to five years or 100,000 rounds.

The Browning Sweet 16 A5 Wicked Wing Shotgun boasts a steel action and barrel finished in burnt-bronze Cerakote; chrome-plated bore; composite stock with close radius grip, finished in Mossy Oak camouflage; shim-adjustable length of pull and Briley oversized controls. For enhanced accuracy and tighter patterns, the Sweet 16 A5 Wicked Wing Shotgun includes four Invector chokes and also employs Browning's Total Barrel Dynamics (TBD) system. TBD enhancements may include improved chambering and forcing cone design, barrel contour, bore diameter, choke tube constriction and more. www.browning.com



BENELLI SUPER BLACK EAGLE 3 28-GAUGE

The Benelli Super Black Eagle 3 remains a top choice for demanding, die-hard waterfowlers nationwide and is a great offering for bird hunting in general; however, ultra-popular 12- and 20-gauge shotguns are not always the most appropriate caliber. For small game and upland birds, a 28-gauge is a perfect complement, most notably dove and quail, and the recoil is quite manageable. That said, the combination of shooting comfort, reliability and Benelli SBE 3 overall performance in a 28-gauge package is definitely worth sharing with your customers.

Like other SBE 3 models in the lineup, the new 28-gauge offering boasts Benelli's Inertia Driven operating system, ComfortTech 3 recoil reduction, shock-absorbing Combtech technology and QuadraFit drop-and-cast adjustment. The SBE 3 28-gauge also features oversized bolt handle and bolt-release controls, carbon-fiber stepped rib, fiber optic sight and Crio Choke Tubes. The 28-gauge also scales down the chamber size to 3 inches without compromising top-shelf Benelli Super Black Eagle performance. www.benelliusa.com





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Select chamberings are available in a left-handed configuration.



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Sellmark Looks Forward

This optics company is poised for growth as the sales boom continues.

BY HR STAFF

As a company on the cutting edge of the optics and smart optics industries, Sellmark has grown by leaps and bounds, adding additional brands that include Sightmark, Pulsar and BulletSafe. *Hunting Retailer* sat down with Jeff Murray, executive vice president of sales and marketing at Sellmark, to talk about how the company is weathering the current sales boom and what it envisions for the future.

HR: Can you talk about the company's history and its place in the industry today?

JM: Sellmark has an interesting story and business model. I have been with Sellmark since 2006, and when I started, we were mainly selling Generation 1 Night-Vision products, as well as early digital night-vision handhelds. Since then, we have introduced many brands that have market-leading positions such as Sightmark (digital night vision), Pulsar (thermal imaging), and BulletSafe — industry-leading value in body armor. Our strategy as a company has been to develop niche markets that the major optics players overlook or don't pay attention to.

HR: What specific product category or model have you seen the most growth in recently?

JM: Digital night-vision and thermal imaging has been our most notable segment of growth. I think the No. 1 thing contributing to this is the normalization of this type of hunting. Fifteen years ago it was almost taboo to talk about night-hunting because everyone associated it with poaching. What Pulsar



and Sightmark have done, making it easy to record and share your experience on social media, has helped grow the market as more and more people are starting realize how fun this is and how much hog eradication and predator control helps our native habitat.

HR: As the total number of shooters continues to grow across the country, how has that impacted your growth strategy?

JM: COVID was very kind to our industry in terms of accelerating the number of new shooters.

There have been reports of as many as 10 million new shooters since March 2020, which brings new life and opportunity to our industry. We have experienced a significant increase in sales of red-dot sights, traditional optics and shooting/firearm accessories over the past two years. Planning has been difficult. We have seen major swings in NICS checks, supply chain disruptions and consumer demand. The good news is that I think all of our brands at Sellmark are poised for a solid year in 2022, with growth planned in each segment.



↑ Jeff Murray



HR: What do you say to hunters who might not have considered thermal or night-vision optics because they think they're just for tactical shooters?

JM: I think they are getting bad information. We have actually seen the opposite trend. Tactical shooters/thermal hunters are an opposite correlation to the sport. Looking at some of our end-user data, consumer profile, etc., we are much more heavily geared toward the everyday hunter vs. the tactical shooter doing 3-gun competitions, long-range competitions or similar activities. My biggest pitch to potential new night hunters is to dip your toe in with a digital scope or, if the budget allows, an entry-level thermal. Take it out, use the equipment, and understand if this is for you. I claim it's the most fun you can have after midnight with your clothes on. If you love it, selling your older equipment to upgrade has never been easier via social platforms, and you now understand more of what you're looking for in higher-end gear.

↓ Sellmark has seen huge growth in digital thermal and night-vision optics among hunters.



HR: Is there developing technology in the thermal or night-vision world that might change the way shooters buy or use these optics in the future?

JM: Digital optics have come a long way in the last three years, which is getting more and more people into this sport. You are also seeing an increasing number of thermal and night-vision companies start up. Five years ago it was just ATN, Pulsar, Sightmark, what was Armasight/FLIR and Trijicon. Now, several new thermal manufacturers are sourcing from Asia, like IRAY, AGM, Bering, Fusion and X Products; N-Vision is making product stateside. All of this new competition is starting to drive innovation. As a result, I think we are going to see more innovation over the next five years than ever before. I also expect we will continue leading the industry-innovation charge with respect to these technologies.

HR: Do you have any predictions on what we can expect out of the firearm and optics industry in the next year? The next five years?

JM: Speaking solely on the optics side of the house, I think you will start seeing digital optics, overlays



and recording capabilities being added to your equipment industry-wide. Younger demographics want to be able to share their experiences with friends, family and other social outlets, so creating equipment that allows you to do this will continue to grow and expand. Of course, it's a tough battle. Hunting has been a very traditional sport, and introducing technology has had its struggles — the industry is very slow to adopt.

HR: Where does Sellmark see potential for growth?

JM: Potential growth... I talk often about digitizing optics. Digital optics, including thermal imaging, is a space where I see tons of growth. I personally think entering or growing digital optics in the traditional hunting scope space, i.e. the ultra-popular 3-9x40 rifle scope platform, is challenging. That said, you already have great companies like Vortex, Leupold, Burris and Sig dominating that space, but there is no innovation happening there to drive new users.

↑ Sellmark's Jeff Murray is passing the hunting tradition on to his family.

HR: What can we expect out of Sellmark in the second half of 2022? What products have you most excited for the future?

JM: Sellmark has quite a few releases planned for the second half of 2022. All of our brands will have significant new product releases from July to December of 2022.

HR: How does Sellmark support its dealers?

JM: The FFL dealer is the lifeblood of our brands and industry. We do things a little differently at Sellmark, as 100% of our sales and marketing are in-house, meaning we don't use outside reps. We value that direct relationship with the customer. We want to own that relationship 100% and not have third-party contractors owning the most important relations between the manufacturer and customer. Sellmark does countless other things to try to make





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business with us appealing, easy, profitable and mutually beneficial. We achieve this by trying to offer our products with solid margins to dealers and aggressive retailers, and by partnering them with an internal rep that is a subject-matter expert.

This industry is so different and has so many layers. Your FFL dealer is going to need a completely different level of service than your e-commerce dealers or big-box businesses/mass merchants. In order to bridge that gap, we created internal teams specializing in that area of business. Our traveling sales reps that service the FFL dealers are in territory 50% of the time, visiting face-to-face with dealers about what is happening in their specific region and asking what we can do to help them become more successful with our brands.

HR: Do you have any advice for retailers about selling high-tech optics in general and Sellmark products specifically?

JM: Education is key. You are never going to be able to sell digital/thermal products if you don't have a knowledgeable staff. These are basically computers we are putting on firearms that bring a new element into shooting. You need to understand how to zero and how to troubleshoot issues, and you need to know what works in your region/area. You also need to keep a close eye on what the market is doing. If you can't talk about a product or understand how to operate it, how are you going to get people to buy it? Thermal, night-vision and digital technology can be scary at first, but when you get out and actually understand how the product works (what it can and cannot do) and are able to communicate that effectively to customers, you will start to see results.

HR: What's your personal favorite Sellmark or Pulsar product, and why?

JM: I have to list two products. First, the Sightmark Wraith is something that holds a special place with me, as this past year, my oldest

son, age 7 at the time, harvested his first buck with this optic. We were able to document his progression at the range by watching video of his previous sessions. We learned where he was making mistakes in point of aim or other shooting fundamentals. He thought shooting with the Wraith, a 24-hour, full-color daytime/digital night-vision optic, was the coolest experience, and it really sparked an interest with him in not only shooting sports, but hunting, too.

My favorite Pulsar product is a little different than most would think, since most people go straight

“These are basically computers we are putting on firearms that bring a new element into shooting. You are never going to be able to sell digital/thermal products if you don't have a knowledgeable staff.”

to the Trail or Thermion series thermal riflescope — the Helion thermal handheld monocular is, by far, my favorite. I take that unit on every daytime and nighttime hunt, hike, scouting session and even vacations. The amount of wildlife you miss using traditional optics during the day can be staggering. You don't realize how well these animals blend in and work through native vegetation. With the Helion, I spot more deer, pigs, coyotes and other animals than I ever did with traditional optics — I had no clue they were out there. I believe it is a tool all outdoor enthusiasts should own. Once you start using these handhelds, they quickly rank right up there with your favorite binos. **HR**





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A Guide to Growing Your Customer Base

How can your hunting retail business pick up new customers?

BY MICHAEL D. FAW

Everyone has heard the comment, “Customers are kings.” Customers are the reason that businesses exist because they come to shop and leave their dollars behind when their needs have been met. Customers are truly the lifeblood in any business, and there are ways to improve and expand your business’ customer base.

Ask yourself some questions. Can you identify your typical customer? Do you know where those customers came from and where to go to pull similar customers from? Who is your top customer? Finding customers can be a challenge, but it can be accomplished by any business that knows the top reasons customers come through your door.

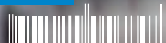




Photo: John Haynes



Understanding Customers

Pause for a moment and think about your customers — the ones that come every week or month, those you see seasonally, and those you just see sometimes. What do they have in common? Besides hunting and firearms, do other traits stand out? Are they predominately deer, elk or waterfowl hunters? Each have specific gear needs. When considering current customers, what stands out as things or events they have mentioned, what they ask you or your staff, how they are dressed, and comments about items or firearms they have bought and any mention of your competitors or their online shopping habits? Do you know if your typical customer travels to hunt? Do they go out of state? Do they hunt deer, elk, or upland birds or possibly waterfowl? How often do they hunt? Do they have kids who hunt with them?

Listen carefully and your customers will tell you a lot about themselves. Take notes and start building a basic customer profile that includes a list of customer categories. It is a challenge to connect the dots about customers and where they come from — and where they are headed. Time spent on customer research is an important first step in finding more customers. The majority of customers you serve fall into a specific hunting market segment. Obviously hunting is the first category. Look at patterns with regular shoppers and the new clients (friends) they bring with them. Learn these customers by name, and pay attention to details such as the name of their hunting dog or their favorite hunting rifle brand. Customers can be truly wowed if you know them by more than just another face with a wallet.

When you are outside your business and have the chance to attend events where hunters gather, such as fundraiser banquets by nonprofits, game department hearings, and other events that attract hunters (your customer base), shake hands and make friends. You can make a professional impression by creating and handing out business cards to anyone you meet at those events and verbally inviting them to stop by your business.

You should also learn about radio stations your customers listen to, hunting publications they read or mention they saw articles in, and other information categories your customers visit on a regular basis. This could help you determine a place to drop an advertisement. At a minimum, invite current and potential customers to follow you on social media and to visit your website.

→ Your female customer base is undoubtedly growing. What are you offering to them that your competitors aren't?



↑ Get to know your customers and potential customers. Are they small-game hunters? Bowhunters? Dog owners?

Customer Outreach

Once you have built a customer profile, it's time to start working in the arena where your current customers are active — and new customers could be. Use your social media and website chan-

nels to send invitations for potential customers to come check out new hunting gear or firearms. Anytime new products arrive in your retail center, post the details online and mention if there are limited quantities.

Reach out to potential e-customers through aggressive email campaigns, and when possible, run a contest and capture an email address so you can build your lists for future promotions. Also mention new arriving gear on your website and through multiple social media channels. Show detailed images of the new gear and products and work to pique customers' interest with a simple question. Then answer the question a few days later. Be creative in what you ask and what you post, and track the results through coupons or customer comments. Be certain to welcome new faces who arrive at the sales counter and mention something they saw online. Keep detailed notes on what works and what doesn't.

You should work to also turn your retail center and its online space into a resource. Keep track of trends in hunting gear, hunting seasons that will open soon, top news stories related to hunting, firearms, archery, knives and optics and post many details online. The more interesting and current the information is on your Facebook page or website, the more customers will come back and start to build a connection. If you just post something and forget it, your customers will fade away.

Be certain to build a bridge or marketing program to show you and your staff have the





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expertise or gear to help customers achieve their hunting and shooting goals. A month before hunting season, put out the Welcome Hunter signs — don't wait until the Friday night before a Saturday opener. Yes, there are last-minute shoppers, but if you mostly cater to them, you have potentially missed a month or more of other customers' shopping and cash dropping.

Build the Relationship Bridge

Word of mouth is a powerful motivator to get new customers through your front door or to bring back repeat customers. They heard you had product X in stock, or in a certain camouflage pattern, or that you were having a sale, etc. Others tell their friends about what they saw in your store. Customers who feel welcomed are more likely to return, bring friends, or tell others.

Be certain to work with your employees — and coach the staff at all positions — to always make customers feel welcome. These steps can include greeting customers as they come in the door with a simple “welcome to name of your retail center here” and sincerely thanking them when they make a purchase or a simple “thanks for stopping by” comment as they leave. Don't pressure, but

→ Show customers that you and your staff have expertise that can help them achieve their goals. This is especially applicable in technical niches like archery.

do offer to assist if a customer looks puzzled or seems to be searching for something.

Another key in building customer relationships and bringing more customers in is by building a distinctive brand. Become known in the region as the best-stocked source of hunting firearms, bows and arrows for hunting, hunting clothing for females, or whatever it might be. Strive to be the best in several product lines and customers will notice — and tell others. You can also increase brand recognition by putting your business, name and contact info on everything you hand out. Do stock and sell branded ball caps, T-shirts, coolers, hoodies and other items. Friends see where their friends shop — and that is often where they go also. Calendars at the end of year with hunting-themed images each month are also great customer reminders. If you wonder what works with customers in your region, study how your competitors are conducting outreach. Do they hold classes, offer free seminars, host





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product test days, offer big buck contests and such?

Another way to build customer connections is by making weekly or monthly contact with your top customers. Just a quick e-mail to let them know that you have new bow models for archery hunters, new dog gear for upland hunters, or the latest decoy for waterfowlers, can be motivators to visit and buy. Sending a customer a handwritten thank-you note if they spend several hundred dollars (for example, to anyone who buys a new rifle or shotgun or possibly a tower hunting blind) is golden customer outreach. If they purchased a firearm, you have their address on the FFL form. The standard numbers regarding customers and their spending is the 20/80 rule: most numbers indicate approximately 20% of your customer base provides 80% of your income. Make that 20% always feel welcome, work to move regular customers into the 20% category, and always thank these customers in extra ways. Build a potential customer list with the information you gather. Look at patterns with shoppers and the new clients (friends) they bring with them, and plan an outreach strategy.

Connecting with customers, and finding new

customers, should be time invested every week in your business. If you only sit at the counter reading a hunting magazine and drinking coffee while customers come and go, or as they drive by on the street out front, you are missing opportunities and also missing the dollars they are spending.

If you need more details about your possible customers, take a quick look at the National Shooting Sports Foundation's Hunting in America: An Economic Force for Conservation report (available free online) and you will see that hunters spend about \$185 million per day — yes, day — in America, and there are around 11.5 million hunters in the U.S., with around 8 million of those hunters pursuing deer. These numbers are growing. The report also breaks down hunting activity by U.S. regions and species. Page 11 in this report breaks down spending habits by specific categories such as handguns, optics, clothing, ammunition and other topics. It's very valuable information about customers. You can also discover similar information from your state or county's harvest reports. These are all clues about your customers.

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Are You Paying Employees the Right Wages?

Finding the compensation sweet spot will retain great workers without breaking the bank. But getting there can be a major research challenge for small-business owners.

BY ERIK GUNN

Your business is growing, and it's clear you'll need to hire another employee or two by fall. Have the wages you're offering kept up with what people expect? Or are you unwittingly paying a lot more than the market rate?

Knowing the appropriate pay rate for the people whose jobs are at the core of your business can be a significant challenge. So how do you set pay rates? There are ways to arrive at the right answer systematically.

People Philosophy

Lisa Bazzoni is compensation director for MRA-The Management Association, an employers association based in Wisconsin and with offices in Illinois, Minnesota, and Iowa.

"The first thing a business owner needs to do is really determine what his or her people philosophy is," Bazzoni says. "A lot of people skip this step, but it really provides a lot of clarity for the rest of the process."

There's a range of such viewpoints. Some companies view workers as an expendable resource — the proverbial "warm body" who has a specific set of tasks to fulfill and can be replaced when necessary.

To be clear, Bazzoni isn't recommending that approach. But more than a few businesses operate just that way.

"At the other extreme," Bazzoni says, "there are employers who will say of their employees, 'This human being is an asset, and I want that asset to be with me for the long haul.'"

Whether you're trying to live by that approach, its opposite, or something in between, she says, "A lot of pay decisions — and a lot of other people decisions — are going to play into whatever the philosophy is."

Bazzoni continues: "If I am viewing the humans who are working for me as an asset, then maybe I'm going to pay a little higher than everyone else does, provide milestones for people and skill-based pay programs" that allow them to increase wages over time based on measurable and consistent metrics.

Gathering Data

Figuring out those market rates — whether your aim is to match them or consciously exceed them — is the next step.

Sure, you can surf the internet and probably find a lot of isolated examples, not to mention every opinion under the sun, for free. Even at that price, though, it's probably not worth what you're paying for it.

"It's not very reliable," Bazzoni says. "Reliable data has a price tag on it." Reliable, she says, means "data that we can track to the source and verify its accuracy."

Most likely you will get the best information if you turn to a consulting firm or an employers group like MRA — and if the data you get is compiled from sound methodology. Typically it will be collected from highly detailed surveys, anonymous so the employers participating can provide more candid answers. Ideally they will be answered by

those employers' human resources departments. Solid data will be validated to reflect geographic differences and also different ways companies may define particular jobs. "Job titles can be meaningless," Bazzoni says. Good research will drill down beyond those to enumerate the different skill sets and responsibilities employers may assign to a particular





you're going to want to do is establish a range around that."

For instance, do you know you want to pay above market as part of a strategy that builds long-term loyalty and commitment to the business? Consider setting the wage in that context a few dollars an hour higher. Are you deliberately paying under market rates, knowing that you'll probably experience more turnover? Perhaps you'll go down to \$17.50 an hour.

And you'll probably want to structure more complex wage systems, with bands for various titles and skill levels and then metrics for choosing where a given worker fits in those bands.

So where do you find that kind of information? Searching for compensation consultants and making sure they're in your business field is one option. And employers associations are found in most parts of the country; consider checking out what they have to offer and whether it would benefit your business to join one.

Still, even the best-quality sources can have some limitations. If you're in a rural area, the data is less rich because the labor pool is smaller, making it hard to establish the actual market price for particular skill sets.

And what if there aren't any resources of that kind where you are? Or what if the price tag is steeper than you feel you can afford? There are other options for information. Some may have drawbacks, but they might be better than nothing.

Seeking Alternatives

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics publishes lists of occupations and their pay rates by regions. You can find it by starting here: www.bls.gov/bls/blswage.htm. Then check listings by state or by metro area.

While reliable, it's also likely to be a year old or more because of the time that passes between when it's collected and when it is published.

"Your labor market might have changed in that period of time," Bazzoni says.

There might be some data closer to home than you are aware of. Check your local chamber of commerce to see if it has conducted a compensation survey of its members, for example.

Still another source may be public-sector pay scales for people in the trades you're employing. As public information, those should be relatively available. But they also come with limitations: government wages may be higher or lower than their private sector counterparts.

"I did a proposal for somebody who said, 'We don't want to compete with county employees — their salaries are very low and we're drawing our people from the private sector,'" Bazzoni says. In other geographic areas, the opposite may be true: That government scales are higher than private sector ones.

Employer of Choice

Sometimes businesses rely on wage data from other locations, then factor in local cost-of-living data to adjust their own pay rates. That can be tricky, though.

"Cost of living and cost of labor are two different issues," Bazzoni says. "For some jobs, you may have to pay more just to attract someone to your area."

Having established your basic structure, Bazzoni advises, "You really have to keep your ear to the ground." Casual employee chitchat, requests from job applicants for a particular pay level — none of these have the authority and reliability of a carefully conducted survey. But they do provide insight on people's expectations in your industry and geographic area.

To be sure, pay alone won't keep good workers or attract applicants, and pay alone might not be why people turn you down. Even if that's what they tell you.

"When people turn down your offer, they're always going to say it's about money," Bazzoni says. And if they do — and if that happens repeatedly — take it seriously.

But be aware that might just be an excuse for something else, including a bad reputation as an employer for other reasons: management style, poor communication, a lack of opportunity for advancement and many others.

"Are you an employer of choice?" Bazzoni says. "If you're not training people well, if you're not treating them well, no amount of money is going to help you." **HR**

position "so that your 'equipment operator' is the same as my 'equipment operator.'"

By the Numbers

In today's job market, such data is likely to change often. "We typically recommend businesses look at this data annually," she says. "When unemployment was higher, companies could get away with every three or four years."

If you're able to get solid data in hand, you need to look back where we began, with your fundamental human resources approach.

"If the market says the going rate is \$20 an hour" for a particular job, Bazzoni says, "what





Hot New Chamberings: Do You Need To Stock Them?

We've got a rundown of some new chamberings and verdicts on whether or not you should worry about carrying them.

BY MARK CHESNUT

In the not-too-distant past, stocking the correct rifle hunting ammunition for customers wasn't all that difficult of a job. Unless you were among the biggest of big retailers with a huge ammo section, all you needed to do was make sure you had a variety of .30-30, .308 Win., 30-06, .243 Win. and .270 Win. to keep your customers stocked up. For those guys who hunted elk or other really big game, having a few loads in .300 Win. Mag. and 7mm Mag. was also a good idea.

My, how things have changed!

What's with all the 6.8 ?O& and .457 %\$#, anyway? Who comes up with all these new chamberings, and do hunters even buy guns in those calibers? Plus, does a retailer really need to worry about stocking ammo in these chamberings, or does doing so just create more aggravation – not to mention more work?

Let's take a quick dip into the somewhat new and partially obscure cartridge pool to try and determine what's what, and what's critical to have on your shelves. For our purposes, we'll mostly focus on calibers that have just come along in the last three or four years. And we'll use the terms "chambering" and "caliber" interchangeably for simplicity.



Running Them Down

The big daddy of these calibers, though it's not really new, is the 6.5mm Creedmoor. Originally designed as a long-distance target-shooting and competition round, the 6.5 Creedmoor is very much like the .260 Rem., a formerly popular long-range caliber that many love for hunting deer and other medium game. One key to the 6.5 Creedmoor's popularity is the fact that it retains more velocity than the ever-popular .308 Win. at ranges beyond 400 yards, while also exhibiting less bullet drop. Incidentally, because of its light recoil, the 6.5 Creedmoor is a big hit with young hunters and others who are recoil sensitive. Verdict: As you already know, this is the hottest thing going, and you absolutely must keep some on hand or you will lose customers to other shops that do stock them.

The 6.5 Creedmoor's little brother, the 6mm Creedmoor, is a necked-down version of the 6.5mm Creedmoor with the goal of similar ballistics and even less recoil. What makes it different from the much-loved .243

Win.? For one thing, it can use longer projectiles without a problem. Second, many hunters like the fact that it can fire a heavier bullet than the .243, which typically tops out at 100 grains. Verdict: Better stock this one, too, as it is a fairly popular round, and those who shoot it tend to go through a lot of ammo.

With those two cartridges behind us, let's get into some of the newer ones from the last few years that many still don't know much about. While not created as a deer hunter cartridge per se, the .224 Valkyrie is capable of taking mid-sized game and is a great coyote getter. It can fire a 90-grain projectile at about 2,700 feet per sec-



ond (fps) and do so with very little recoil. Best of all, it can be chambered in AR-style rifles, which many prefer for varmint hunting these days. Verdict: If you cater to lots of varmint hunters, you might want to keep some of these handy. If you



↑ The 6.5 PRC is probably worth stocking. It's sort of a magnum version of the uber-popular 6.5 Creedmoor and is popular for long-range hunting.

typically don't sell much varmint ammo, it might not be worth your trouble.

The 6mm ARC (Advanced Rifle Cartridge) is a .243-caliber intermediate rifle cartridge introduced by Hornady in 2020. A useful cartridge good for everything from home-defense to hunting, it can be chambered in AR-style rifles or short-action bolt



guns. With great ballistics, it outperforms the 6.8 SPC at long ranges with less recoil than common short-action calibers like .308 Win., and at least eight companies are already offering rifles in 6mm ARC. Verdict: This round is probably going to get more popular over the next few years. If you don't begin stocking some now, you should look into doing so sometime in the near future.

Introduced in 2019, the 27 Nosler was introduced as somewhat of a replacement for the venerable .270 Win., which is still a very popular deer cartridge. It'll drive a 150-grain bullet about 400 fps faster than the .270 Win., resulting in less drop (11 inches less at 500 yards) and more downrange energy. It's also appropri-

ate for bigger game, since it is loaded with bullets up to 165 grains. Verdict: While undoubtedly a great performer, there aren't a lot of rifles chambered in 27 Nosler. Consequently, you can ignore this one unless you regularly have customers asking for it.

Is That All?
Believe it or not, we're just getting started.

The 6.5 PRC (Precision Rifle Cartridge) was introduced in 2018 and is somewhat of a magnum version of the 6.5 Creedmoor. The 6.5 PRC pushes a 143-grain bullet at about 2,960 fps, creating 2,782 ft./lbs. of energy (fpe) at the muzzle. That's about 250 fps faster than the 6.5 Creedmoor, equating to less bullet drop and more downrange energy. Developed as a long-range hunting round, this chambering has so far hit its target. Verdict: I think this is one to watch. The wise retailer will add some to his or her inventory to accommodate savvy hunters buying rifles in this caliber.

If you think that's probably all the 6.5s to discuss, think again. The 6.5 Weatherby RPM (Rebated Precision Magnum), like many Weatherby





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"You would be wise to wait a bit and see how the 6.5 Western catches on before deciding whether or not to offer it to customers."

magnums before it, does what it was designed to do — in this case, launch a bullet faster than other chamberings in the same caliber. It sends a 140-grain bullet out of the muzzle at about 3,075 fps, still delivering 1,500 fpe at 500 yards! Of course, it pays for that by being chambered in heavier rifles and producing more recoil. Verdict: Unless you live in a part of the country where people do a lot of hunting with magnums, this is one you probably don't need to worry about.

While shooting bullets the same diameter as the .270 Win., the 6.8 Western cartridge, introduced just last year, uses a much shorter case, allowing it to be offered in short-action rifles.

While it launches a 165-grain bullet at nearly 3,000 fps (2,970, to be exact), it can be loaded with heavier bullets up to 175 grains, making it more appealing than the .270 Win. for hunting larger game animals. Verdict: Since Winchester is chambering some of its popular rifles in this cartridge, there will be some demand. But you might be wise to wait a bit and see how this chambering catches on before deciding whether or not to offer it to customers.

Designed to put wild hogs down on the spot, the .300 HAM'R was designed by Wilson Combat for optimal terminal performance on tough-to-kill game. Based on an expanded .223 Rem.

case, the HAM'r offers performance similar to the .30-30 Win., a proven big-game getter for generations. Best of all, it can be chambered in an AR-style rifle, which many hog hunters prefer for their high magazine capacity. Plus, its ballistics exceed those of the popular 300 Blackout that many hog hunters have embraced. Verdict: Since there aren't many guns currently chambered in the .300 HAM'R, this is one you can leave off your shelf with likely little customer frustration.

Are You Done Yet?

Well, almost. Let's take a quick look at two more.

The 300 PRC (Precision Rifle Cartridge) is designed to send a big bullet downrange at great velocity, thereby dispatching large, tough game animals in their tracks. Based on a .375 Ruger case necked down to .308, this caliber drives long 212- and 225-grain bullets at more than 2,800 fps, yielding 3,800 to 4,000 fpe at the muzzle. That will still get you nearly 2,600 fpe at 400 yards.

Verdict: With well over a dozen gun manufacturers already making rifles in this chambering, it's probably not one you want to ignore. Put some on your shelves to capitalize on what is likely to be a very popular caliber.

MOA-H MH-H MOA-2 MH-5

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6-24x50

The SIII PLR 6-24x50 Zero-Stop riflescope features a new internal zero-stop mechanism, more precise windage and elevation adjustments, improved light transmission, and clarity. Engineered for long range target shooting and hunting, the scope provides you with all the tools you need to get on target and stay there.

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Last but not least is the .350 Legend. And while new — it was just introduced in 2019 — it is far different than the other chamberings we have discussed thus far. Rather than a long, fast bullet, the .350 Legend tends toward the shorter, slower end of the spectrum. Winchester developed the car-

→ If you're in a state that bans traditional centerfire rifle cartridges but allows straight-walled cartridges, the .350 Legend is probably already selling well at your shop. If you're not stocking it, you should be.



tridge for use in states that ban most traditional centerfire rifle cartridges for hunting but that allow straight-walled cartridges even if fired from a rifle. The round packs more punch than the .30-30 Win., while producing less recoil than the soft-shooting .243, and is loaded in bullet weights

from 150 to 265 grains. Verdict: If your business is in a state that doesn't allow centerfire rifles for hunting but makes an exception for straight-walled cartridges, definitely make sure you have a selection of these on the shelf. If not, you can probably leave this one off your list. **HR**

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Taming the Recoil Beast

Recoil management is important for every big-game hunter, no matter how experienced they are.

BY ACE LUCIANO

The snap of a twig alerted us to the presence of buffalo. Over the next several seconds, the sounds grew louder as the entire herd moved toward our position in the brush. "Shoot the lead bull," my professional hunter, Peet Bezuidenhout, whispered in my ear. "He's a good one."

While seven hard days and close to 100 miles of walking had placed us as close as 30 yards to buffalo, an ethical shot opportunity had not presented itself until this moment. The approaching buffalo would cross an opening of approximately 30 yards directly in front of us. I placed my rifle on the shooting sticks and pushed the safety forward as the lead bull stepped into the open. Just as he turned his head and became aware of us, the .416 roared, followed by the immediate sound of bullet striking flesh.

"Keep shooting!"



Round two was on its way as the bull ran directly away from us, and shot number three, again, returned the loud slap of a hit.

We followed the mortally wounded bull for 35 yards carefully and very slowly. Suddenly, there was a loud grunt in front of us, and the trackers peeled off to the left and right. My .416 roared again as the bull ran behind a clump of brush. As he emerged from the other side, the report of Peet's .375 sounded just to my right. The bull went down, and we circled behind him for a final insurance shot through the spine and into the vitals.



↑ In Africa, "dangerous game" like Cape buffalo requires by law a minimum of .375 caliber and greater. The recoil is no joke.

As the adrenaline wore off, there were congratulatory back slaps and high-fives from both Peet and his trackers, Robert and Shule. My father came up from his observation point behind us and whispered something intelligible in my ear.

It was at this point that I noticed something else during the celebration: My ears were ringing.

In the excitement, I had not had time nor thought to place my hearing protection from around my neck into my ears, and I was now paying the price. My right shoulder and cheekbone also began to feel "different," and I could tell that the recoil from five shots out of the .416 Remington rifle I was carrying had taken its toll. Fortunately, years of practice and many rounds of big-game loads had prepared me to perform under pressure.

If your customers ever plan on hunting large/dangerous big-game animals, they will likely also experience a similar situation to mine following the shot(s). How they prepare for this moment will likely affect their accuracy, success, and soreness when all is done.

Taming the Beast

Most people are familiar with the basic equation of force equals mass times acceleration. A larger mass traveling at similar speed to a smaller one imparts more force than the smaller one under the same conditions. When you fire a rifle, this force is imparted in two directions — with you on the receiving end of one of them. "The bigger the rifle, the bigger the kick," while not always the case, is most often true.

There really is no way to effectively prepare for the true effect of recoil other than training for it by shooting the gun that you will use on your hunt. And the more familiar a hunter is with the fit, feel, function and recoil of your firearm, the better he or she will shoot it.

Preparing and Preventing Recoil

"Big" is a relative term. I've shot .375s that felt like a gentle push, and I've been punished by a .300 Win Mag. My only scoping incident, ironically, happened with a .308. Fortunately, this advice will help your customers no matter the size or caliber they shoot.

There is no better way to prepare for accuracy under hunting conditions than to practice prior to the hunt. The more a shooter practices and becomes familiar with their rifle, the better they will shoot it. In some cases, this is not always possible, such as in the case of using a borrowed rifle. If this is the case, some time spent on the range with said gun is more than worth the extra time and effort spent.

It's Not Just Big Rifles That Kick

A lightweight 3 1/2-inch 12-gauge pump, an over-and-under loaded with 3-inch duck loads, and even several guns marketed as starter or youth guns can also deliver quite a wallop.

My very first shotgun was a Beretta Companion model, single-shot 20-gauge that was lightweight and slightly too long for me, and it had a hard metal buttstock to meet my youthful shoulder. Fortunately, my insane desire to hunt and shoot allowed me to (mostly) ignore the kick — but in truth,



most kids today would greatly benefit from a soft-shooting semi-automatic as their first experience with a shotgun. The same goes for youth rifles. There are plenty of high-quality firearms made to fit smaller frames. These guns have a shorter length of pull, a smaller buttplate, and smaller stock dimensions made specifically to fit smaller bodies. One of the worst things you can do (recoil-wise) is to give an adult rifle to an undersized youth.

Proper Fit

As previously mentioned, your rifle or shotgun should follow the three F's — fit, feel and function. For example, a rifle that has a stock that's too long for your length of pull will change the dynamic of how the butt contacts your shoulder and the weld of your cheek to the stock, and it can cause you to feel the sting of recoil a bit more. Conversely, a short stock can also detrimentally affect how you shoot. In a shotgun, this will likely cause you to see most of the barrel in your sight picture and cause you to shoot high. If the length of pull of a rifle is too short for the shooter, their cheek will meet the stock further forward and can be a rather serious issue if they are shooting with a scope. Scope-bite injuries, where the recoil forces the rifle back and causes the scope to hit the shooter's eye/nose/forehead, can range from a bump and a little bruised pride to something serious enough to require stitches.

Get Off the Bench

Shooting a rifle from a bench with sandbags should be reserved for determining initial accuracy or to check the accuracy of the rifle after travel, and you should make sure your customers know this. It's important in order to have confidence when shooting from field positions. It also is the place where the shooter will tend to feel the most recoil, as the forward-leaning position allows little movement of the body to absorb the force of the shot.

One way your customers can send more rounds downrange with reduced felt recoil is to use a Caldwell Lead Sled or similar device, and you should be stocking these. This will take the majority of the rifle's recoil and transfer it to the sled — but I find that accuracy between sled shooting and non-sled shooting,

→ A gun that fits, a proper cheek weld to the stock, and hearing protection all have an effect on perceived recoil.



↑ For some firearms, the only option to use a recoil pad is to use one that "slips on." Just make sure the gun still fits you well enough to shoot.



even with a solid rest, can differ. Be sure your customers are aware of this and adjust accordingly.

After the rifle shoots where the shooter wants it, the rest of their practice should focus on more realistic situations. Shooting off of a pack, off of shooting sticks, sitting, kneeling and offhand shots should all be in the practice regimen. While this should be done on at least several outings with a hunting rifle, a hunter can avoid recoil, expense and the unfortunate development of a flinch by shooting a smaller, but similar rifle at least intermittently during their training. This rifle should be at least similar to the size and dimensions of the one they'll be using it and have the same type of action.

end of their stock. Many of today's newer firearms come with one of these recoil pads already mounted, but if a customer has an older rifle or a double rifle, chances are the stock has either a solid or metal buttplate or the installed recoil pad is hard, either by design or by the effects of aging.

There are numerous brands to choose from. Limb Saver by Sims vibration laboratory states that their new Air Tech pads provide up to a 70% felt recoil reduction for a comfortable, flinch-free shooting experience. I can attest to this claim, as I own several of them. KICK-EEZE manufactures recoil pads made of Sorbothane, a proprietary compound that provides shock absorption and reduces recoil rather

well. Pachmayr produces a recoil pad called the Decelerator. Browning equips their firearms with their Influx Technology pads, while Remington labels theirs Super-Cell. All of these products help tremendously in reducing recoil and come preconfigured to fit many standard firearms.

For those that do not have a ready-to-mount option, they offer a grind-to-fit that you can mount and carefully grind or sand flush with the butt of the gun's stock. A slip-on recoil pad is also an easy solution. This pad, you may guess from the name, slips over the bottom end of a rifle or shotgun. If you remove an older recoil pad or have a rifle that has a slightly

shorter length of pull than the customer needs, this solution can work well. Use caution, though, in simply slipping a recoil pad over a rifle or shotgun stock that already fits the shooter, as it can add as much as two inches to the length of pull. That can change the way the gun feels and shoots, and it can even have the opposite effect by transferring recoil from the shoulder to something a little more delicate — like the face. In my experience, Sims pads do this very well, but all do an adequate job in taking the sting out of shooting.

Additionally, several companies manufacture recoil pads that either slip into an inside pocket on a shooting shirt or have their own system to wear outside your clothing on your shooting shoulder. I have one made by PAST (likely the most well-known), and I often combine these two recoil reducers when shooting more than a few rounds at the range.

Finally, and as mentioned in the account of my Cape buffalo hunt above, using ear protection can actually help a shooter's ability to put rounds on target. From simple foam plugs to custom silicone to today's amazing both over- and in-the-ear electronic shooting protection devices, you should be stocking a wide variety of hearing protection so your customers will be less apt to flinch from the shock of the shot. **HR**



↑ This feral ox/scrub bull fell to a .375 H&H — a large caliber rifle, but on the smaller side of what most consider “big bores.”

If they will be hunting with a bolt-action rifle, they should practice with a bolt-action rifle. If they will be shooting a double rifle and don't have one smaller, a double shotgun can be used to fire additional rounds downrange.

My practice rifle is a bolt-action .223 Remington. This caliber allows me to shoot accurately to most big-game hunting ranges while also having the benefit of almost zero felt recoil. By practicing with this smaller gun, I am able to work on things like effective and smooth trigger pull, sight picture, and fast follow-up shots. Developing good habits over time easily translates to holding steady, having a good sight picture, and a smooth trigger pull when a hunter fires their big-game rifle. Similarly, the more the customer shoots a shotgun, the more they will adapt to and have less effect from what recoil it produces.

Pad the Punch

Boxers and martial artists today cover their hands with padded gloves to help prevent injury to their opponents — and to their hands. Hunters can do something similar to their big-game rifle or even Grandpa's Fox double shotgun by adding one of today's advanced recoil pads to the bottom



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The Modern .30-30

An ammo evolution brings the .30-30 in line with modern hunting expectations.

BY MARK CHESNUT

After 25 agonizing minutes, the big buck finally left his feeding spot only 75 yards in front of me on a green northwest Oklahoma wheat field and vanished into the thick blackjack woods along the north edge.

I say “agonizing” because I had filled my rifle tag on a somewhat smaller buck the day before, but rules are rules and sometimes you have to let the big boy walk. Fortunately, I still had ammunition to test, and two doe tags in my pocket.

I didn’t have long to wait as two mature does soon trotted out onto the field and began feeding. Resting the crosshairs of my rifle just behind the larger doe’s shoulder, I clicked off the safety and slowly took up the slack on the trigger.

At the report, one doe hightailed it for the woods, leaving a trail of dust in the air behind her. The other lay still on the ground, flat on her side as though struck by lightning — not always the normal reaction of deer shot with a .30-30.



The .30-30 Today

The .30-30, of course, is far from a new chambering. Released in 1895, just a year after the popular Model 1894 Winchester lever gun was introduced, the .30-30 Win. was the first sporting cartridge loaded exclusively with smokeless powder.

The original .30-30 Winchester load had a 160-grain round-nosed bullet leaving the muzzle at 1,970 feet per second, a substantial step up from other popular cartridges of the time like the .32-40 Win. (165-grain bullet at 1,450 fps) and .38-55 Win. (255-grain bullet at 1,320 fps). The cartridge's speed and power, combined with the lever-action's capacity and quickness, made it an instant hit as a deer cartridge. In little time it was the choice of many who were serious about putting venison on the dinner table.

"The cartridge's speed and power, combined with the lever-action's capacity and quickness, made it an instant hit as a deer cartridge."

Over the past 125 years, many more powerful, flatter-shooting cartridges have been introduced, winning over the hearts and minds of many American deer hunters. While some stalwart .30-30 lovers still took their beloved lever gun to the fields, many pushed them to the back of the gun safe.

Then, in 2005 Hornady introduced its LEVERevolution ammo, which used an elastomer flex tip on a spitzer bullet, making it safe for use in the gun's tubular magazine but ballistically superior to its round-nosed predecessors. Hornady's introduction of the Evolution ammo was just the shot in the arm the .30-30 needed. The new Evolution bullets delivered a substantially higher ballistic coefficient than the previous round-nosed ammunition required for the tube-fed rifles. They also retained more downrange energy.

Suddenly, .30-30s began showing back up in the hands of hunters who had shelved them. After all, Hornady had basically turned a 100-yard deer

→ While the .30-30 Win. was an instant hit as a deer cartridge, many more powerful, flatter-shooting cartridges have come along since its introduction 125 years ago. New ammo choices are bringing relevance back to this venerable deer cartridge.

rifle into a 200-yard tool overnight.

While the Evolution ammo continues to be popular, it's not the new kid on the block. Just in the past few years both Hornady and Federal introduced new ammo specifically designed for deer hunters using the .30-30. And it was one of those loads that so authoritatively flattened the doe mentioned earlier.

The Ammo

The two .30-30 loads introduced last year were Federal's new HammerDown load, and Hornady's

Sub-X Subsonic round. Since I was using the Federal offering in the aforementioned hunt, let's take a look at it first.

I first learned about HammerDown from a press release boasting of nickel-plated brass with a Gold Medal primer seated in place and a specially formulated propellant that the company said provided superior ballistics through lever-action rifles. The kicker was a molecularly bonded bullet that the company said was designed to deliver best-in-class expansion and weight retention. As a longtime lever gun fan, I was intrigued.





On the range with an old rifle I'll discuss later, I found the new ammo to be quite accurate. While it didn't match the precision of high-quality competition fodder fed through a \$10,000 bolt gun, performance was plenty good for most deer hunting purposes.

Unfortunately, I was carrying a different rifle chambered in a different caliber the day before when I shot my buck. But shooting the doe with the HammerDown ammo left little doubt in my mind that it'll get the job done on white-tailed deer at legitimate lever-gun distances. I wasn't able to recover the bullet as it passed all the way through the animal, but it definitely put the hammer down on that deer and put some extra meat in the freezer.

The other new offering, Hornady's subsonic Sub-X, is a unique one indeed. As suppressors become more popular and more and more companies offer lever rifles threaded for a muzzle device, this ammo will also put the hurt to whitetails at typical lever action range, although I wasn't able to get any in time for my hunt last fall.

The Sub-X round uses the popular XTP bullets designed specifically to expand reliably at subsonic speeds — a necessity for hunting deer and other similar-size game. Featuring a lead core, the projectile has long grooves in its gilded metal jacket and a Flex Tip insert inside its hollow-point cavity. Plus, the company says it features powders selected for optimal performance and consistency from lot to lot.

Of course, Hornady's Evolution ammunition is still stellar fodder for .30-30 lever guns anywhere deer live. It's not the gun and load you'd use on a deer at 300 yards across a high mountain valley, but out to a couple hundred yards it will still do the job quite nicely.

And never forget those old-fashioned solid lead flat- or round-nose bullets shot from a .30-30. They've probably killed as many deer over the years as any other caliber. They're available in weights from 150 to 170 grains from nearly all

major manufacturers. Some to check out include Federal's 170-grain Power-Shok and 150-grain Fusion, Remington's 150- and 170-grain Core-Lokt, Winchester's Super-X 150-grain Power-Point, and Sellier & Bellot's 150-grain SP load.

The Rifles

The .30-30 lever action I was using for the hunt mentioned earlier was Marlin's venerable Model 336, a rifle that has been in production since 1948. I bought the rifle for my oldest son as his first deer rifle when he turned 11, nearly 20 years ago, and it had sat in the safe for the last eight or 10 years as we hunted with other, more modern calibers that have gained popularity.

Hearing of two new offerings, I decided to pull the old 336 out of the safe and see what it might do. Still wearing an ancient, low-end scope from two decades ago, I decided new glass was in order. Since I wasn't going to be taking any long-range shots with a .30-30, my choice was the 3-9x Bushnell Banner 2. At under \$100, this scope offers good quality optics at a very reasonable price point.

While I wasn't able to get my hands on the new Hornady round, the Federal HammerDown load gave me plenty to like. Decker with the Bushnell, I was able to shoot 100-yard, five-shot groups in the 2.5-inch range. That's not tack driving by today's standards, but for an old .30-30 it's pretty darned good performance. And for whitetails

→ Hornady Subsonic ammunition is available in both rifle and handgun loads.



← Federal's HammerDown ammunition boasts nickel-plated brass with a Gold Medal primer seated in place and a specially formulated propellant that the company says provides superior ballistics through lever-action rifles. The molecularly bonded bullet is designed to deliver best-in-class expansion and weight retention.

out to 100 yards, I didn't need to be able to hit a nickel at 500 yards.

While you might think stocking new 336s in your shop is something you won't be able to do anymore because of recent changes in the industry, your fears are actually unfounded. After changing hands numerous times over the years, Marlin was part of Remington when that company declared bankruptcy last year. Fortunately for lever-gun fans, Ruger purchased Marlin in late 2020 and is expected to continue producing the Model 336. With the high quality of Ruger's firearms across the board, that's exciting news.

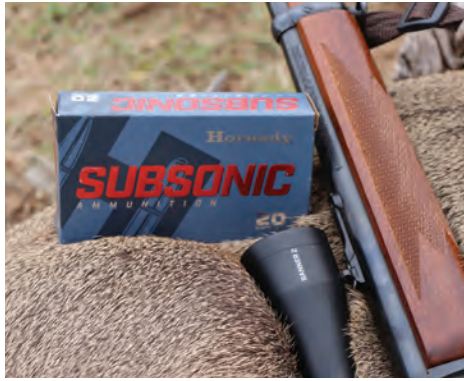
Several other companies make some very fine .30-30 lever guns, and since lever aficionados often have their favorites, it's wise to carry a good selection in your firearm inventory.

Mossberg is right at the top of the heap, with a number of lever guns available chambered in .30-30. That company's Model 464 is a good one that can be found in a few different barrel lengths and a number of finishes, including classic blued with walnut stock. For the tactical shopper, the gun is also available in a black synthetic stock with a matte blued finish. And for those who hunt in inclement climates, the 464 is even available in a Mainecoaat finish with a gray laminate stock.

For gun shoppers looking for a higher-end .30-30, Henry Firearms has some nice offerings that are as beautiful as they are accurate. Henry's newest lever gun is its Slide Gate Lever Action rifle available in .30-30 and a handful of other



→ The Hornady Sub-X round uses the popular XTP bullets designed specifically to expand reliably at subsonic speeds. The projectile has a lead core, long grooves in its gilded metal jacket and a Flex Tip insert inside the hollow point. Plus, the company says it features powders selected for optimal performance and consistency from lot to lot.



calibers. The gun offers Henry's typical high quality along with side-gate loading, a first for Henry. The company also offers a number of other models chambered in .30-30.

A Little Boost

In the end, the venerable .30-30 has been around for over 125 years and isn't going anywhere soon. As ammo companies have breathed new life into it, gun companies have followed suit by expanding the models they offer or offering updated versions of existing lever-action .30-30s.

In this era of high-powered, high-dollar bolt guns with never-before-seen accuracy, the old-fashioned lever gun still deserves some attention. And since many old-timers have the expendable income to add a new gun or two to their safes, offering a few lever-action rifles could boost your bottom line. **HR**

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HUNTING RETAILER

GEAR ROUNDUP

HUNTING SCOPES AND BINOS

For peak proficiency in the field, hunters rely on the one-two punch of a game-seeking binocular and a purpose-built riflescope.



BY GORDY KRAHN

There are two important gear items riflemen and women rely on when the chips are down — a binocular to spot game and determine trophy status and a riflescope to guide their bullet to the promised land.

The fact is humans are pathetic predators — possessing a sense of smell that is practically non-existent and hearing that's average at best. So, it's the hunters' eyes they rely on the most. And good optics make them just that much better. The magnification and clarity afforded by a quality binocular is especially

important when hunting big-sky country but can be equally critical when picking apart close-range brushy terrain. When hunters let their eyes do the lion's share of the "walking," they conserve precious energy when long-range scouting and conceal movement when actively hunting.

Riflescopes help hunters finish what they started. When the pursuit is done, the outcome depends on a well-placed bullet. It doesn't make sense to invest a bunch of money in a rifle capable of punching minute-of-angle groups and then equip it

with substandard glass that inhibits that capability. There are factors to consider when purchasing a scope: the type of firearm on which it will sit, the animals you will be hunting and the type of terrain where you will be hunting. From there, decisions can be made regarding what makes sense for each individual and the flavor of rifle they prefer. Patrons of your store or those who visit your website should carefully consider those qualities that make sense for the type of rifle they own and the type of hunting they do before laying down their hard-earned

Benjamins, and as an informed retailer, you can help in that decision-making process.

Customers looking for an optics edge will undoubtedly be familiar with the adage: Buy the best optics you can afford. Of course, this means different things to different folks, so be sure to have all your bases covered by stocking a wide array of bins and riflescopes in an even wider range of price points to ensure every patron exits with the proper optics to fill their needs. Here are examples that will put them on the right path.





ATN X-SIGHT LTV 3-9X DIGITAL SCOPE

The American Technologies Network X-Sight LTV 3-9X (retail \$599) is a major advancement in day and night digital riflescopes and the latest in ATN's HD optics lineup. Powered by the new ATN Obsidian LT core that is optimized for low power consumption, it delivers more than 10 hours of battery life. The X-Sight LTV provides vivid, crisp clarity during the day and has amazing nighttime performance – via its new QHD+ M584 sensor. Record HD videos and get on target extraordinarily fast with the one-shot zero feature. The X-Sight LTV can be mounted on any firearms platform with standard 30mm rings. www.atncorp.com



AXEON OPTICS 6-24x50MM RIFLESCOPE

Technology meets affordability with Axeon Optics' first long-distance riflescope, the 6-24x50mm (MSRP \$299.99). It features an illuminated glass G-126 second focal plane tree reticle, fast side focus and aluminum tactical-style locking zero-reset turrets with 1/4-MOA windage/elevation adjustments. Multiple lens coatings ensure optimal light gathering and a crystal-clear sight picture. Build on an aluminum machined 30mm tube, it measures 15.2 inches long, weighs 1.6 pounds and comes with a black matte finish. The Axeon 6-24x50mm riflescope uses one CR2032 battery and has 3.1 inches of eye relief. Battery, lens dust cover and microfibre cloth are included. www.axeonoptics.com



BLACK DIAMOND OPTICS LONG RANGE TACTICAL SCOPE

The 3-15x50mm Long Range Tactical riflescope from Black Diamond Optics (MSRP \$899) has a one-piece design featuring a 30mm tube, locking turrets and 1/4-MOA adjustments for both wind and elevation. In addition, it includes parallax compensation and an illuminated reticle and is both shockproof and waterproof. A new MOA reticle offers 2-MOA elevation reference lines and 1-MOA left and right windage reference lines. Fully multicoated European high-definition glass produces excellent light transmission, bright images and exceptional color. It has 4 inches of eye relief and a field of view of 32.5-6.5 feet. www.blackdiamondoptics.com



CRIMSON TRACE BRUSHLINE PRO 2.5-10x42MM BDC SCOPE

Crimson Trace Brushline Pro optics are purposefully built with the experienced hunter in mind. The line includes options for pistols, muzzleloaders, shotguns and hunting rifles, including the Brushline Pro 2.5-10x42mm BDC (MSRP: \$309.99). All reticles have been calibrated for the firearms platform and the line features aerospace grade 1-inch and 30mm tubes that are extremely lightweight. The scopes are fully multicoated and have exceptional light transmission and glass quality. Features on the Brushline Pro 2.5-10x42mm BDC include a second focal plane CT Custom BDC Pro reticle, 1/4-MOA turret adjustments and 3.8 to 4 inches of eye relief. All Crimson Trace scopes are covered under the company's lifetime protection guaranteed warranty and backed by its award-winning customer service team. www.crimsontrace.com



GERMAN PRECISION OPTICS 4.5-27x50i GPOTAC RIFLESCOPE

German Precision Optics (GPO) has entered the high magnification first focal plane riflescope market with its new premium tactical GPOTAC 4.5-27x50i FFP (MSRP \$1,499.99), featuring a 50mm double HD objective lens system for enhanced resolution coupled with GPObright high transmission lens coatings. Its 34mm main tube maximizes optical performance while supporting incremental elevation adjustment capabilities. It is crafted from a solid, one-piece, dustproof, waterproof, nitrogen-filled body for strength and durability. An illuminated mil-spec LRpro magnifying reticle powered by the GPO iCONTROL illumination system assists the shooter in even the lowest light conditions. Custom designed turrets are mil-based and include a zero-stop system. It comes with a throw lever, cleaning cloth, see-through bikini ocular, objective lens scope covers and an extra CR2032 battery. www.gpo-usa.com



HAWKE OPTICS VANTAGE BINOCULARS

The all-new Vantage 8x42mm and 10x42mm binoculars from Hawke Optics (MSRP \$159/8x42mm; \$169/10x42mm/both come in a green finish) deliver a high-quality product at an entry-level price point. The Vantage series is powered by Hawke's System H2 optics line, which brings extra value to a wide range of binoculars and scopes that are all dependable, accurate and affordable. These new binoculars feature multicoated optics that are nitrogen-purged and waterproof and fogproof. The 8x42mm binocular has a field of view of 367 feet at 1,000 yards and the 10x42mm binocular has a field of view of 304 feet at 1,000 yards. www.hawkeoptics.com



**MEOPTA MEOPRO HD PLUS
10x42MM BINOCULAR**

Meopta Sport Optics' new Meo-Pro HD 10x42mm binocular (MSRP \$499) is a completely redesigned Gen 2 version of the original, featuring a more advanced HD optical system. The MeoPro HD Plus delivers sharper, brighter images and better contrast and resolution than the Gen 1 models. Hunters will also appreciate the edge-to-edge clarity, wide field of view and outstanding low-light performance of this mid-priced bino. The focus wheel has been redesigned for a smoother, faster and more precise focus, and durable rubber armoring provides a better and more comfortable grip in all weather conditions. The bino's lightweight magnesium alloy fogproof, waterproof and shockproof body is built to withstand the most brutal hunting conditions. www.meoptasportsoptics.com



**OSPREY 10x42MM LRF
RANGEFINDER BINO**

Hunters who want the convenience of a binocular and laser rangefinder in one efficient optic can turn to the 10x42mm LRF from Osprey (MSRP \$799), which combines the function of a quality binocular with a laser rangefinder so users can locate game and determine trophy status and then range the distance to it with the push of a button. It features an exit pupil diameter of 21.5mm and a view angle of 5 degrees. This waterproof 10-power bino/rangefinder is powered by a CR2 battery and weighs 33.5 ounces. www.ospreyscopes.com



**PULSAR THERMION 2 LRF
XP50 PRO RIFLESCOPE**

Pulsar's Thermion 2 LRF XP50 Pro (MSRP \$6,599.99) is a potent thermal imaging riflescope that combines a classic, sleek design with a built-in laser rangefinder. Its powerful 640x480 microbolometer resolution detects heat signatures up to 2,000 yards away and displays them on a crisp 1024x768 AMOLED screen. With 10 hours of battery life, this thermal riflescope boasts high-precision, ambidextrous lens focusing and a variable magnification of 2X-16X. The included laser rangefinder has a range of up to 875 yards. The Thermion 2 LRF XP50 Pro features built-in photo and video recording and Wi-Fi connectivity. It has an IPX7 waterproof rating and features 10 reticle shapes in nine color modes, picture-in-picture mode and five unique shooting profiles. www.pulsarnv.com



RITON 1 PRIMAL 4-12x50MM RIFLESCOPE

The 1 Primal 4-12x50mm hunting riflescope from Riton (MSRP \$369.99) features 12X magnification for finely detailed long-range shooting while its 50mm objective lens and illuminated red-dot reticle excel in low-light situations. With a budget-friendly price tag, the 1 Primal 4-12x50mm riflescope features crystal-clear Riton HD glass, an integrated throw lever and fully multi-coated lenses. Complete with a 1-inch tube and capped, zero-resettable turrets, it is a versatile scope for a wide range of hunting applications. The Riton 1 Primal is waterproof, fogproof and shockproof and has 1/4-MOA windage and elevation adjustments and a fast-focus eyepiece. www.ritonoptics.com

**SIGHTMARK WRAITH
4K MINI 2-16x32MM
RIFLESCOPE**

The Wraith 4K Mini 2-16x32mm digital riflescope (MSRP \$799.97) combines Sightmark's rugged quality with advanced digital optic technology, detecting objects up to 300 yards away in the darkest of nights and displaying them on a flawless 1280x720 FLCOS screen. Although it's extremely light and compact, the Wraith 4K Mini features big-time capabilities. Its built-in recorder produces AVI-format videos in 1080p or 4K resolution, ensuring every shooting memory is captured and preserved in incredible detail. It also boasts 8X digital zoom, full-color HD imaging during the daytime and digital night vision mode. With an 850nm IR illuminator and first focal plane reticle options, the Wraith 4K Mini enables shooters to locate and engage targets, near or far, with speed and precision. www.sightmark.com



SIGHTTRON S6 5-30x56MM ED RIFLESCOPE

Constructed from a one-piece, 34mm aircraft aluminum tube, Sightron's new S6 5-30x56mm ED premium riflescope (MSRP NA) employs premium Japanese glass with extra-low dispersion (ED) elements to enhance contrast, improve clarity and reduce chromatic aberration. Combined with Zact-7 Plus anti-reflection multicoatings, it provides hunters with excellent light transmission and flare reduction. The S6 5-30x56mm ED offers side-adjusted parallax correction starting at 10 yards and its large tactical turrets are easy to read and resettable to zero, and they house Sightron's highly accurate and repeatable zero-stop mechanism. Daylight illumination is accessed via a low-profile side dial that provides 11 intensity levels with on-off alternating dial positions. Combined with the MOA-2 and MH-4 reticles, the scope provides fast target acquisition in any lighting conditions. www.sightron.com





TRIJICON CREDO HX

The Trijicon Credo HX family was designed with serious big-game hunting in mind. Offering rapid both-eyes-open target acquisition in any light, as well as pinpoint accuracy and a tough-as-nails construction, the Credo HX is available in seven satin finish models. This family includes six fast and intuitive LED-illuminated reticles including MOA Precision Hunter, BDC Hunter Holds, and Standard Duplex. Models include both 30mm and 34mm tubes, up to 100 MOA of adjustment, and large objective lenses for low-light conditions. Thanks to fully multi-coated broadband anti-reflective glass, all Credo HX models offer users edge-to-edge clarity with excellent light transmission, as well as true detail and color with zero distortion. www.trijicon.com



US OPTICS TS-12X RIFLESCOPE

The USO TS-12X (MSRP \$595) is a compact, lightweight and versatile first focal plane rifle scope that offers reliable performance in extreme hunting conditions. It features a 44mm objective lens, 30mm tube, rapid-focus diopter and tactical locking elevation and windage turrets. It allows the shooter to quickly adjust from 3X to 12X and provides parallax adjustment from 10 yards to infinity. Reticle options include the traditional second focal plane Triplex reticle and the first focal plane Mil Hunting Reticle (MHR). The TS-12X weighs 18.11 ounces and overall length is 9.6 inches. It has a type III hard anodized matte black finish and 2 to 3 inches of eye relief. www.usoptics.com



UTG TRUE HUNTER 4-16X40MM RIFLESCOPE

The UTG True Hunter 4-16X40mm rifle scope from Leapers (MSRP \$189.97) is built on its True Strength platform, completely sealed and nitrogen filled, shockproof, fogproof and rainproof. Its mil-dot range-estimating reticle features the EZ-TAP Illumination Enhancing (IE) system with red/green Dual-Color mode and 36 Color Multi-Color mode to accommodate all weather/light conditions, and one-click high-tech illumination memory gets the shooter back to the color/brightness setting last used. It also features premium zero-locking and zero-resetting target turrets, emerald-coated lenses and parallax adjustment from 5 yards to infinity. It comes with Picatinny/Weaver rings and high-quality flip-open lens caps. www.leapers.com



VANGUARD VEO HD 10X42MM BINOCULAR

Vanguard's VEO HD binocular (Retail \$369.99) delivers crisp, clear images and is designed for easy use. Advanced engineering ensures worry-free operation, even in harsh environments. It has a right-eye locking diopter adjustment for absolute precision, and a large center focus wheel and three-stage twist-up eye cups offer smooth and easy adjustment. Built tough but lightweight, supported by Mitsubishi Rubber Armor, the VEO HD's multicoated, extra-low-dispersion ED glass provides stunning clarity and vivid color. Waterproof and fogproof, it attaches to a tripod or monopod using a BA-185 adapter (not included), and its open-bridge design makes it easy to grip. It comes with a strap and carrying case. www.vanguardworld.com



VORTEX RAZOR HD LHT 4.5-22X50MM RIFLESCOPE

The Razor HD LHT 4.5-22x50mm FFP from Vortex (MSRP \$1,999.99) answers every demand of the long-range hunter with a rifle scope that's among the lightest in its class. Users still get the HD optical system and rugged build that made the Razor HD LHT such a hit. Where the Razor HD LHT 4.5-22x50 FFP distances itself is in not just adding a first focal plane reticle, but also getting the most out of it by incorporating the XLR-2 reticle system, which is intuitive and easy to use. Long-range hunters also need an optic they can dial in the field, and the Razor HD LHT 4.5-22x50mm FFP offers a locking elevation turret with a RevStop zero system for a reliable return to zero after dialing. www.vortexoptics.com



ZEISS LRP S5 3.6-18X50MM RIFLESCOPE

The Zeiss LRP S5 3.6-18x50mm first focal plane rifle scope (MSRP \$3,299.99) features a sturdy 34mm main tube and provides a massive amount of total elevation travel out of the box, which is extremely beneficial for long-range hunting. Its 50mm objective lens yields a more compact scope and allows for mounting it on smaller rifle platforms, making it a preferred choice on long-range hunting rifles that call for a more compact optic with excellent performance characteristics. This model is available in both milliradian and minute-of-angle configurations. With an extremely wide field of view, the Zeiss LRP S5 is a great choice for long-range varmint, predator and big-game hunting. www.zeiss.com



Shark Hunting

Seeking investors isn't quite like it's portrayed on TV's "Shark Tank," but the show does offer truths would-be entrepreneurs can learn from.

BY JOSH FIORINI

The ABC show "Shark Tank" has earned popularity with viewers of all ages. All different types of audiences appreciate the show, whether for the stories of opportunity and the American dream or the abysmal failures and embarrassments that take place (or maybe both). While obviously made for TV and both vastly over-dramatized and over-simplified, "Shark Tank" portrays the basics of a real equity finance presentation environment. The moderators ask real questions and expect real answers, and those who are not prepared get rejected.

No one wants to be the confident potential entrepreneur who ends up being laughed out of the room by investors. So, what do you need to do to prepare if you're seeking investors? What do you need to hunt the shark?

Your Weapon

Unlike "Shark Tank," in the real world, pitch presentations are rarely done in person and certainly not on the first look. And there are certainly no time limits or other people waiting in the hall. Your first foot in the door may be on a phone call or via a Skype conference. Eventually, you may meet with your investors in person, but you can't count on that. As such, your primary weapon to hunt the shark is your presentation or prospectus.

This is the platform that will deliver your payload to your target. If you are starting a new business, that presentation is your business plan. If you are an existing business, it will be a prospectus or offering letter accompanied by a "deck," some type of print or digital multimedia



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arrangement that makes your case. There is myriad literature available online about how to properly construct these types of presentations. (NSSF has a variety of such resources available to its members through the Member Portal and online store.) You must be thorough in your design presentation, ensuring it is designed for your audience, your industry and your objective and arranging the content so that the presentation engages on its own without you personally "selling it," because that's how you're going to get to that in-person meeting.

Your Ammunition

If your weapon is your presentation, what does it shoot? The short answer is information, the long answer is that it must be very specific and particular information packaged just right. Some of the obvious information you need to deliver is what your business does, a description of what and how it will earn, market research and expectations, financial projections and, very importantly, valuation.

Those that have seen the television show will have seen many a shark swim quickly back to the depths because of poor (and sometimes laughable) valuations. Valuation, simply, is the monetary value you are placing on your business. If you are looking for \$50K for a 10% share in your business, that implies your business is worth \$500K. There needs to be a basis for that

valuation in realistic revenue projections, peer group values, presales, existing revenue streams (if you are already up and running), etc.

Of the ammo your weapon can utilize, this valuation is the most important. Research the techniques necessary to arrive at a reasonable valuation or ask your accountant. From there, you must back up that cold shot with information and research on your market, your strategy and the products or services you'll be offering. The more detailed the better. It is up to your weapon, or your presentation, to ensure that all that ammunition is delivered efficiently to its target.

Your Accessories

The devil is always in the details. In planning any hunt or armed engagement, you must know as much about



your quarry and its environment as possible. This type of intelligence enables you to finely hone your approach and optimize your chances for success. Will you go at dawn or dusk? Is it better to go in the rain? Answers to these kinds of questions can spell the difference between success and failure.

It is no different for hunting the equity shark. Learn as much as you can about your potential partner, including what types of businesses and presentations have excited them in the past and what types haven't. The TV show does a great job of showing how some ideas connect well with certain investors but not with others. Do your best to choose wisely, and just as you would be sure to wear rain gear to hunt in the rain, when the time comes, present yourself with the appropriate level of personal polish. Rehearse answers to questions with your spouse or friends, and stay up to date on



current events to be knowledgeable in conversation. Study your presentation front to back so you know it in your bones, and look and speak

professionally and appropriately to your audience. Every bit of you is being analyzed, so present it all as best you can.

← Sharks are in business to make money. Be sure to go in with a solid business plan or prospectus and a reasonable valuation.

Josh Fiorini is the former CEO of PTR Industries, Inc. He spent the first decade of his career in finance, holding positions as an equity analyst and portfolio manager before starting his own hedge fund. This experience, along with a deep background in manufacturing, banking and private equity, has made him a sought-after contributor on numerous boards and discussion groups on political and economic issues for media outlets, corporations and community organizations. Fiorini currently invests his time and resources with non-profit initiatives and acts as a management consultant to various firms in the firearms industry as the founding and Managing Partner in the firm Narrow Gate Management. HR

Your Fight Is Our Fight



PRESERVING OUR VALUES

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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BY GORDY KRAHN

HUNTING RETAILER NEW PRODUCTS



APEX AMMUNITION TURKEY TSS SHOTSHELLS

Apex Ammunition, makers of premium handloaded ultra-high-density Tungsten Super Shot (TSS) shotshells, is now shipping its new Turkey TSS loads. Designed for maximum penetration at extended ranges, they are available in 10-, 12-, 16-, 20-, 28-gauge and .410 bore options in a variety of shot sizes, shell lengths and blends. Handloaded for the ultimate in consistency and quality control, the density of Apex TSS at 18.1 g/cc allows the use of smaller shot sizes and larger payloads, which means more pellets on target and maximum downrange energy. MSRP: \$39.99-\$70.99/Box of five/10- through 28-gauge; \$58.99/Box of 10/.410 bore www.apexammunition.com

BONE-DRI MOISTURE-ABSORBING GUN & AMMO BAG

Engineered using Absorbix moisture-wicking technology, the Bone-Dri Gun & Ammo Bag protects handguns and ammunition from corrosion and rust after they've been exposed to moisture. Whether users are headed to the gun range, hunting, fishing, camping or hiking – or storing handguns, ammo or suppressors in a safe – it keeps prized possessions safe, dry and ready for use. Crafted from durable nylon, this bag stops rust before it starts.

Using the Gun & Ammo Bag makes cleaning easier because it seeps out moisture from the firearm's inner workings. It weighs just 13 ounces, measures 14 x 9 x 1 inches and is backed by a lifetime warranty. MSRP: \$29.99 www.bone-dri.com

NOMAD PURSUIT CONVERTIBLE TURKEY VEST

Nomad's Pursuit convertible turkey vest is an excellent option for hunters who prefer a minimalist yet highly functional approach, worn as a traditional vest or unclipped and used as a fanny pack. It features two friction call pockets, a box call pocket with an adjustable buckle and protective rigid-foam outer shell, and an external Thermacell pocket to help fend off unwanted insect attacks. It also incorporates a chest pocket for quick access to a rangefinder, GPS or cell phone. The Pursuit includes a removable high-density foam seat for long-lasting comfort, and magnetic attachments help keep it folded and quiet when in stealth mode. A stowable game bag enables users to pack their turkey back to the truck after a successful hunt. MSRP: \$100 www.nomadoutdoor.com



BLOCKER OUTDOORS PREDATOR QUEST JACKET

Blocker Outdoors has teamed up with Les Johnson, world champion predator caller, to deliver a new line of Predator Quest special-purpose clothing, including the Turret 1/2-Zip jacket. This garment features a rip-stop poly/spandex shell with a smooth poly lining and 200 grams of thermal mapped Thinsulate insulation in the back and handwarmer pocket, 150 grams in the body and 100 grams in the hood and sleeves. The Turret 1/2-Zip jacket is DWR (durable water repellent) treated to repel moisture and has two chest and two large waist pockets for storage and warmth. An adjustable, removeable hood further protects the wearer from the elements. MSRP: \$159.99 www.blockeroutdoors.com



BEAR ARCHERY RAZORHEAD VWS BROADHEAD

In the late 1950s, Bear Archery introduced the original Razorhead and it quickly became one of the most successful and widely accepted broadheads in the bowhunting community. Today, nearly 70 years later and after increasing demand from consumers, Bear has reintroduced the popular broadhead with a twist of modern technology. The all-new Razorhead VWS (Variable Weight System) returns with both single- and double-bevel options and features an insert system that allows bowhunters to change broadhead weights to 150, 175, 200 and 250 grains. Both the single- and double-bevel models are constructed from high-grade stainless steel and will ship with three broadheads, three sets of variable weight inserts (nine total) and three field points. Retail: \$69.99 www.beararchery.com



CUSTOM BOW EQUIPMENT ADAPT QUIVER

Bowhunters can now adapt to their surrounds with a new ultra-versatile compact arrow quiver from Custom Bow Equipment (CBE). With generous vertical and horizontal adjustment options, the Adapt bow quiver allows bowhunters to create custom and compact arrow containment solutions, including one with a rear-facing arrow that ensures quick access for a follow-up shot. Its dovetail mount and hood loop provide easy removal and secure storage. Weighing just 9.5 ounces, the CBE Adapt quiver features a light-weight yet sturdy design with full containment for both fixed and mechanical broadheads. MSRP: \$109.99 www.custombowequipment.com





MOSSBERG 940 PRO TURKEY SHOTGUN

In 2020, Mossberg launched the 940 Pro family of 12-gauge autoloading shotguns. Now joining this line of high-performance shotguns is the 940 Pro Turkey, an optics-ready package featuring a choice of 24 or 18.5-inch barrel lengths, HIVIZ Comp-Sight fiber-optic sights, Mossberg X-Factor ported choke tube and full camo coverage in Mossy Oak Greenleaf. At the core of the 940 Pro platform is a durable gas system that can run up to 1,500 rounds before cleaning and is compatible with factory-manufactured 2.75- or 3-inch shells. Performance-driven features include oversized, beveled loading port with redesigned elevator and shell catch for efficient and pinch-free loading. Other features include a slim-profile forend, user-configurable stock and oversized charging handle and bolt release button. MSRP: \$1,120 www.mossberg.com



MILLENNIUM FIELD PRO TURKEY SEAT

Turkey hunters know that a comfortable seat is essential for remaining motionless for long periods of time on stand and that a high-quality, portable perch can mean the difference between bagging that next tom or going home empty-handed. Now available in Mossy Oak Bottomland camo, Millennium Outdoors' premium-quality Field Pro Turkey seat provides serious turkey hunters with a combination of comfort and convenience. It has a quickly deployed, fully adjustable folding seatback for a custom fit – excellent for setting up where there are no trees or for run-and-gun hunting. The seat frame folds for easy transport and is made from powder-coated aluminum, so it will stand up to years of use. It comes with an adjustable padded shoulder carry strap. MSRP: \$104.99 www.millenniumstands.com



SAUER SL5 TURKEY SHOTGUN

Featuring a durable inertia-driven system requiring fewer parts and minimal cleaning, the SL5 Turkey shotgun from J.P. Sauer and Sohn is available in three Mossy Oak camo patterns: Obsession, Bottomland and New Bottomland. Designed for hardcore turkey hunters, this semi-auto 12-gauge shotgun accommodates 2¾- and 3-inch shells and comes with an 18.5-inch deep-drilled, chrome-lined barrel with a stepped rib for precise alignment. It also features a black anodized receiver with oversized extended bolt handle and release button, removable Picatinny rail and durable composite pistol-grip stock with Cervellati recoil pad and sling attachments. The red single-bead LPA front fiber-optic sight facilitates fast and accurate target acquisition. The SL5 Turkey shotgun comes with three chokes, including a Carlson extended Turkey choke. MSRP: \$1,199.99 www.blaser-group.com

ALPS OUTDOORZ ELITE 1800 WILDERNESS PACK SYSTEM

The ALPS Outdoorz Elite 1800 Wilderness Pack System was developed for extreme wilderness hunters, featuring an all-new Elite frame. This new frame hits higher benchmarks of performance and ergonomics thanks to an adjustable torso length, fully adjustable load lifters, contoured lumbar support, anti-sway waist belt and 3D air mesh suspension with an anti-slip lumbar pad. The Elite 1800 Wilderness Pack System weighs 1 pound, 12 ounces with the included rain cover and drop-down weapon pocket. The main compartment features zippers along both sides of the pack so it can be fully exposed to easily access items anywhere in the bag. Inside the main compartment are five mesh pockets to keep smaller items organized. MSRP: \$449.99/Elite 1800 frame and pack bag www.alpsoutdoorz.com



SCOTT ARCHERY VERGE BACK TENSION/INDEX FINGER RELEASE

Scott Archery has introduced a hybrid back-tension-style release with a versatile index finger design that provides archers with the ultimate in adjustability and versatility. With a slim, open-hook design, the Verge gives archers the ability to execute shots using numerous finger placement options. Its single sear mechanical design not only has adjustable travel settings but also features the ability to add a pre-shot click option to create a custom-tailored release. The slim auto-return hook has a pivoting swivel connector to reduce torque while anchoring for maximum accuracy. Its NCS strap accommodates all hand sizes. MSRP: \$149.99 www.scottarchery.com



BENJAMIN GUNNAR PCP AIR RIFLE

The Gunnar – the latest adaptable, premium pre-charged pneumatic (PCP) air rifle from Benjamin – comes in .22- and .25-caliber models, delivering velocities up to 1,000 fps (32 ft./lbs. of energy) and 900 fps (50 ft./lbs. of energy) respectively. It is a great choice for small-game and varmint hunting, pest control and

target shooting. The Gunnar features a five-position external power adjuster, and an internal adjustable regulator allows users to fine-tune the power to their preference. It also has an adjustable buttstock and cheekpiece and rubberized pistol grip. It comes fully stocked with a large 500cc bottle, sidelever, adjustable trigger shoe and lower Picatinny mounting rails to attach monopods and bipods for added stability. MSRP: \$999.99 www.crosman.com



How Many Hunters Are There, Really?

A look at the hard numbers gives us some insight into who's hunting and where these days.

BY BOB ROBB

How many hunters are there in the U.S. today, really? Are there more people hunting today than, say, 20 years ago? Which states have the most hunters? How have the statistics changed over time?

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service compiles numbers on hunting license, tag, and stamp sales annually. You can find their 2021 report on the USFWS website. According to this report, in 2021, there were 15,202,669 paid hunting license holders in the U.S. The report shows that there were a total of 34,712,508 resident hunting licenses, tags, permits and stamps (HLTPS) purchased in 2021, along with 3,878,354 nonresident purchases of the same items. In sum, residents spent \$545,673,926 on these items, while nonresidents spent \$372,804,333, for a grand total of \$918,478,259. That's a lot of scratch!

Total hunter numbers, however, are down from years ago. In 2004, the USFWS reported there were 14.96 million hunters, a number that was down sharply from the peak years of the 1980s, when hunter numbers approached 17 million. According to the USFWS Report, "1980-1995 Participation in Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Watching; National and Regional Demographic Trends," between 1980 and 1995, the number of Americans who hunted and/or fished in the U.S. increased 12%, with the number of anglers increasing 16% and the number of hunters decreasing 8%. Fishing increased at nearly the same rate as overall population growth (17%.) Hunting's 8% decline occurred the first half of the 1990s after a constant level of hunting participation throughout the 1980s. The

number of Americans who hunted was stable from 1980 to 1990, falling 8% from 1990 to 1995. From 1980 to 1995, the Midwest had a slight increase, hunting by residents of the West decreased 6%, the South had a decrease of 12%, and the Northeast saw the largest decrease of 18%.

In 2019 and 2020, the total paid hunting license holder numbers were 15,544,849 and 15,158,443, respectively. Since 2004, the peak year for the sale of HLTPS was 2009, with 45.28 million, which for some reason is a statistical anomaly, since the numbers from 2004-2019 range from 34.19 million to 35.9 million, with a fluctuation of about 2.5 million. The numbers jumped during the COVID years of 2020-21, with 35,091,264 HLTPS purchases in the peak year of 2020, when a surge of new hunters took to the woods looking for something locally to do amid COVID lockdowns and a mini-surge in the locavore movement. How many of them stick with it as lockdowns fade remains to be seen.

Which states have the most total hunters? In 2021, the top 10 were Texas (1,094,753), Pennsylvania (945,731), Georgia (724,269), Tennessee (694,458), Wisconsin (666,670), Michigan (642,242), North Carolina (609,131), New York (550,868), Minnesota (545,300), and Oklahoma (512,724.) Back in 2004, it was Texas (1,027,908), Pennsylvania (1,048,731), Michigan (870,432), Tennessee (725,110), New York (696,679), Wisconsin (689,099), Minnesota (585,104), Missouri (539,062), North Carolina (433,135), and Arkansas (402,493.)

In 2021, which 10 states had the lowest number of paid hunting license holders? As you can

imagine, it's the states with the either the smallest land mass or the most remote locations: Rhode Island (7,514), Hawaii (10,608), Delaware (15,619), Connecticut (32,052), Massachusetts (55,139), New Hampshire (55,562), Vermont (62,237), New Jersey (68,767), Nevada (89,603), and Alaska (93,559.)

An interesting number is the total hunting fee revenue generated in 2021. The top 10 states in this category, in millions of dollars, are Colorado (\$49.7), Montana (\$26.9), Wyoming (\$23.6), Idaho (\$18.7), Kansas (\$18.4), South Dakota (\$13.5), Texas (\$12.1), New Mexico (\$11.7), Arkansas (\$11.2), and Missouri (\$9.9.) The expense of nonresident hunting license and tag fees is a huge part of these, and several other, Western states' annual DNR budgets. Colorado, for example, only generated \$13,270,492 in resident license and tag fee sales in 2021.

According to www.macrotrends.com, the estimated total U.S. population in 2022 is 334,805,269, which of course doesn't include any sort of accurate estimate of the tens of millions of illegal aliens residing here. The 15,202,669 paid hunting license holders in 2021 represent just 4.5% of the total population. In 2004, the total estimated U.S. population was 292,805,298; the 14.96 million hunters represented 5.1% of the total population.

The question is, why are hunter numbers stagnant, or slowly declining, as a percentage of the overall population?

Baby boomers have been the backbone of hunting in America for decades, but of course, my generation is growing older, and many have either passed on or quit hunting altogether. The younger genera-

tions, whose lives are regimented in ways I could not conceive of growing up, are engrossed in scheduled after-school activities and indoor stuff, like video games or trolling social media. I thought of this with the passing of the great football coach and TV analyst John Madden in late December. The Madden NFL video game franchise, developed in 1988, has sold upwards of 200 million copies. Kids today play the video game; kids in my generation played pick-up football outside. In fact, we hated to be cooped up inside, rain or shine.

Becoming an outdoorsman takes time, and lots of it; you learn best by stumbling around woods and making mistakes, not from video games, social media, or YouTube. This dovetails with the increased urbanization of America, where development continues to gobble up open space where people used to hunt. Many private landowners, who decades before welcomed courteous hunters who asked permission, now often post their land or lease it to those with deep pockets. Several studies I've seen over the years point to a lack of easy, affordable or no-cost access for a place to hunt as one reason people give up hunting. Sure, there are millions of acres of public land open to hunting, but most of it is located west of the Mississippi River, and much of it is pretty crowded during popular big game hunting seasons. And the number of single-parent households, usually headed by women, is steadily rising. Moreover, most of these women aren't hunters or shooters — though those numbers have been on the rise in recent years — meaning their children don't have a mentor at home who can teach them and their friends. **HR**

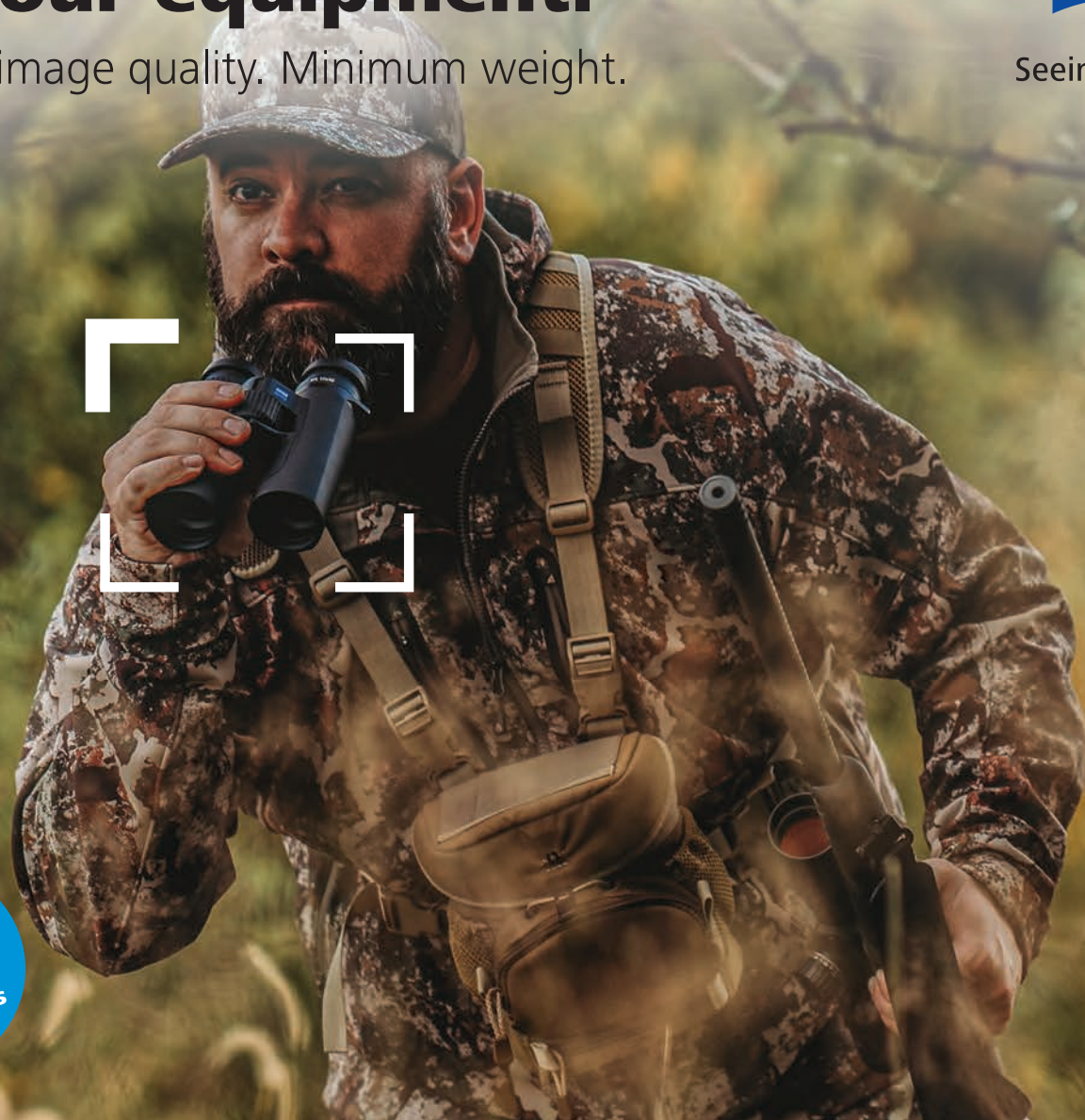


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