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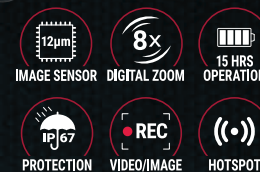
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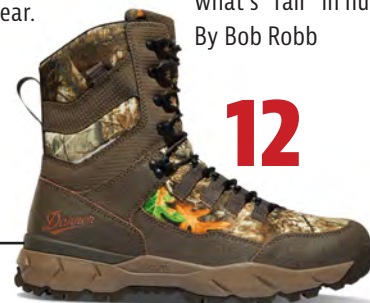
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Outdoor Recreation Is a \$862 Billion Industry

The U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) recently released economic data for 2021, and the numbers show that outdoor recreation generates approximately \$862 billion in economic output (1.9% of GDP) and 4.5 million jobs. To put that in some context: This means the outdoor recreation economy contributes more to the United States economy than oil and gas extraction, mining, and agriculture. The report includes national and state level data.

This is the fifth consecutive year that BEA has released government data on this industry sector. The numbers show how the outdoor industry, which played a vital economic and social role throughout the pandemic, has since sustained remarkable growth, and continued to bolster local economies. The

outdoor recreation economy came back stronger than ever after the COVID-19 pandemic and remains a steady source of strength nationally and a booming job creator locally.

"The latest BEA numbers are a testament to the power of outdoor recreation, and we are thrilled to see our industry's economic impact grow," said Vista Outdoor CEO Chris Metz. "This data shows that people continued to venture into the outdoors for health, wellness and adventure in record numbers last year as businesses across the industry worked to expand participation and bring more people into the outdoors. The goal now: Build on that momentum. We will stay focused on increasing access to public lands, building more recreation infrastructure and growing participation across all outdoor activities."

Outdoors Tomorrow Foundation Hits Milestone

Outdoors Tomorrow Foundation, a provider of in-school outdoor education, has hit a new milestone with its Outdoor Adventures program now in 1,000 kindergarten, middle and high schools across the country.

"All across the country over 100,000 students annually will learn wildlife conservation, hunting, fishing, shooting sports, and much more with this milestone achievement of 1,000 schools," said Outdoors Tomorrow Foundation Chairman Kyle Shidler.

OTF's Outdoor Adventures program is a fun, interactive course where students are taught lifelong skills using an integrated 34-unit curriculum comprised of math, science, writing, and critical thinking skills. The 290 detailed lesson plans cover angler education, archery, hunter education, boater education,

orienteering, survival skills, camping, outdoor cooking, challenge courses, backpacking, mountain bike camping, paddle sports, rock climbing, shooting sports, CPR/first aid and fauna, flora and wilderness medicine and much more. OA teachers can pick units specific to their region and local ecosystems.

Founded in 1981 in Dallas, Texas, the Outdoors Tomorrow Foundation is a public nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. For many schools, grants from OTF help offset the cost of the program. The curriculum can be taught as a P.E., elective, or agricultural science class. There are more than 415,000 program graduates thus far, and each OA student spends 180 hours learning outdoor education per year. The program has totaled 16 million classroom hours of outdoor education to date.

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How to Avoid Performance Bias Among Your Workers

More objective employee reviews can reduce turnover and boost engagement and motivation.

BY KEN WYSOCKY

Despite our best intentions, we all have biases, both conscious and unconscious. And in the workplace, these biases — defined as systematic beliefs that make us favor one thing over another, often resulting in errors of judgements and unfair results — are common.

But with an increasingly sharp focus on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in today's workplace, organizations are paying more attention to bias mitigation strategies than ever before. One particular area of emphasis, for example, is eliminating biased hiring practices, which range from the way job postings are worded to how resumes are screened to the ways interviews are conducted.

But there's another area that also

deserves scrutiny: biases in performance reviews.

"I wouldn't say performance bias is something new, but it's just perhaps bubbling to the surface," says Kristen Swigart, a senior people scientist at Culture Amp, a consulting firm that helps organizations improve employee engagement, retention, diversity, development and performance. "Organizations are focusing on DEI, most importantly that equity piece — homing in on all aspects of decision-making to ensure systems and processes are equitable.

"Biases are particularly serious in making high-stakes decisions about people — things such as hiring, promotions and performance reviews. These are very consequential moments in time for both employ-

ees and organizations, so it's really important to take as many steps as possible to mitigate biases in those processes."

When bias creeps into performance management, organizations run the risk of not promoting or rewarding the right people — employees who deserve greater compensation or to hold a higher position, Swigart says.

"But ultimately, performance bias can also negatively impact productivity," she says. "When employees sense bias, it undermines their perception that things are objective and fair and that can lead to reduced productivity, less sense of belonging, lower levels of engagement and higher turnover."

How can organizations determine if performance-review pro-



cesses are biased? Swigart says there are ways to audit performance tools and processes. These audits look for rates of promotion, for instance, among different groups of employees, as well as examine the kinds of feedback that managers give to employees, or that peers give to each other.

“It’s important to note that you can’t completely eliminate bias — it’s a systematic kind of error in our thinking,” Swigart says. “So what we want to do is aim to mitigate and minimize biases.”

Furthermore, after implementing strategies to mitigate biases, it’s critical that organizations monitor how successful they are by performing periodic audits.

“You can’t just create a process and then never return to it again,” she says. “You need to audit processes, too, in order to ensure the strategies continue to reduce bias over time.”

There are many types of performance bias. A common one is gender bias. Based on the demographics of hunting in general, you might employ more men than you do women, which is probably a situation that developed naturally. Just be sure you are evaluating them the same way when it comes time to give raises and feedback. Research shows that men tend to receive more specific and work-related behavioral feedback while women are much more likely to receive vague or personality-based feedback.

Why does this happen? Psychologists explain it with a concept called role-congruity theory, where for a variety of long-standing, well-ingrained societal biases, men are seen as more suited for leadership positions while women tend to be seen as less stable, which creates the proverbial “glass ceiling.”

Other kinds of performance bias include:

- Recency bias, where managers judge employees on what they did well or poorly in the near past instead of looking at overall performance.
- Primacy bias, in which a positive or negative first impression out-

weighs overall performance.

- The halo- or horns-effect bias — a tendency to let one good or bad trait take precedence over others.

- Centrality bias, in which managers give all of their direct reports middle-of-the-road performance grades — threes on a scale of one to five, for instance — to avoid appearing to be extreme or hurting employees’ feelings.

- Similar-to-me bias, where managers give higher marks to employees that possess the same skills, interests, opinions, backgrounds, etc. as theirs.

- Idiosyncratic-rater bias, in which a manager give employees high skill-evaluation ratings if they’re great at something he or she does poorly, or conversely gives employees lower marks for doing things the manager believes he or she does very well.

- Confirmation bias, where managers specifically look for data or interpret information in ways that confirm their pre-existing beliefs.

One way to mitigate performance bias involves using more structured review tools to collect feedback. When review tools are unstructured, it enables biases to creep in because there’s no defined criteria; that, in turn, creates a vacuum in which managers define performance criteria based on their own biases and intuitions, Swigart says.

A good example of a structured review tool is a so-called situation-behavior impact model that relies on a fill-in-the-blanks approach instead of what Swigart calls “a big, open-ended box.” It starts with a manager picking a certain situation he or she has observed (either positive or negative). Then the manager describes the behavior observed, followed by the impact of the behavior, which then serves as a starting point for a two-way conversation.

For instance, a manager can explain that last week during an important meeting (the situation), an employee interrupted the manager’s presentation (a specific behavior,

stated factually without judgment), which made the manager lose focus. That then caused frustration and embarrassment (the impact).

Or conversely, during an important client meeting, the manager was fumbling for information that the employee gracefully supplied and tactfully offered without being asked — an impressive display of emotional intelligence and keeping

which allows managers to impose their own criteria onto the rating scale. The danger of that is what looks like average to one person may perhaps be above or below average to someone else.

So Swigart recommends using only four rating options, with only one negative, or low-performance, option and three positive options that distinctly differentiate between



cool in a high-pressure situation.

“This approach allows feedback to be more constructive and meaningful and ultimately more actionable,” Swigart says.

Another way to eliminate performance bias is to use a rating scale with fewer options, such as four instead of five. A typical rating scale with five evaluation options — below average, slightly below average, average, slightly above average and above average — makes it easy for managers who want to avoid making tough decisions because they can give everyone the average rating.

Moreover, there’s rarely any definition of what each ranking means,

good on one end and exceeds expectations at the top end.

“This approach reduces leniency bias,” she says. “When managers avoid confrontations with employees, it comes from a good place. But it can skew the objectivity of the data and make it difficult to differentiate between employees.

“If everyone gets an above-average rating, for example, it’s hard to distinguish who to promote. And this kind of rating system shows employees that extra effort and stellar performance gets you more than just an average or above-average rating. Ultimately it becomes a more engaging and motivating process for employees.” **HR**





Catering to Raccoon Trappers

Customers who are trapping for pelts or to deal with problem raccoons will find these three solutions helpful.

BY MARK CHESNUT

While trapping isn't as popular as it used to be, there are still more than 100,000 licensed trappers across the United States who pursue a wide variety of fur-bearing animals. Despite fur prices being low — mostly because of anti-fur sentiment spread by those who don't understand wildlife conservation — many Americans still choose to trap furbearers both for fun and profit.

Aside from trapping for the furs, many people choose to trap raccoons to alleviate various problems like having their dog or cat food eaten off the porch, having their poultry coop raided by the masked bandits or catching a coon that keeps the dogs barking the entire time they are out in the yard.

Wildlife biologists estimate raccoon numbers in North America swelled 15 to 20 times from the 1930s to the 1980s. Since then, numbers have continued to climb as the critters have adapted well to suburban and even

some urban environments. Consequently, those wanting to trap raccoons will find plenty of supply to meet their demand.

Note that the “lovable” raccoon, as many city dwellers consider it, isn't always that lovable. The animals feast on the eggs of game birds like quail and wild turkeys and have been at least partially responsible for the decline in the population of those species over the past few decades. They are also a great pest to deer hunters who run corn feeders. I've seen as many as 14 raccoons below a single corn feeder at the same time on the area I hunt in western Oklahoma, and some learn how to spin the feeder spinner to feed their family below, which can greatly increase the corn bill.

To cater to your coon- trapping customers as well as those looking to get into trapping the “masked bandit,” consider carrying three important pieces of gear.



DOG-PROOF RACCOON TRAPS

One of the problems raccoon trappers have had over the years is catching something other than their target animal in their traps. I know this all too well. As a youngster, I wanted desperately to be a trapper, and the wily raccoon was my favorite target animal. After catching my neighbor's beagle — twice — in my leghold traps, my trapping career came to an end.

That problem has been all but alleviated with the availability of "dog-proof" raccoon traps, which catch raccoons and just about nothing else except the occasional opossum or skunk. These traps were originally referred to as "coon cuffs" since they are so effective at catching the masked bandit wherever he is found.

Dog-proof traps are small metal tubes with a trigger toward the bottom. Bait is placed in the bottom of the trap below the trigger. There are commercial brands of bait available, but many household items work well, from cat food to canned sardines to sweet concoctions like marshmallows soaked in maple syrup. To be caught, the raccoon must reach past the trigger, grab the bait in its agile paw and pull to remove the bait. That triggers the trap, which catches the raccoon by the foot. Dogs, cats, coyotes and foxes don't have the dexterity to reach into the small hole, so they won't be caught in the trap.

One of the best and easiest dog-proof raccoon traps to use is the Duke Dog Proof Coon Trap. It features heavy-duty construction so will last a lifetime. Simply set the trap, stake the chain and push the trap's stabilizing stake into the ground at a 45-degree angle. Since it features a pull-type trigger, it is great for raccoons but will rarely catch other animals. The first time I bought one because of a pesky raccoon troubling my chickens, I caught the culprit the first night using canned cat food for bait.



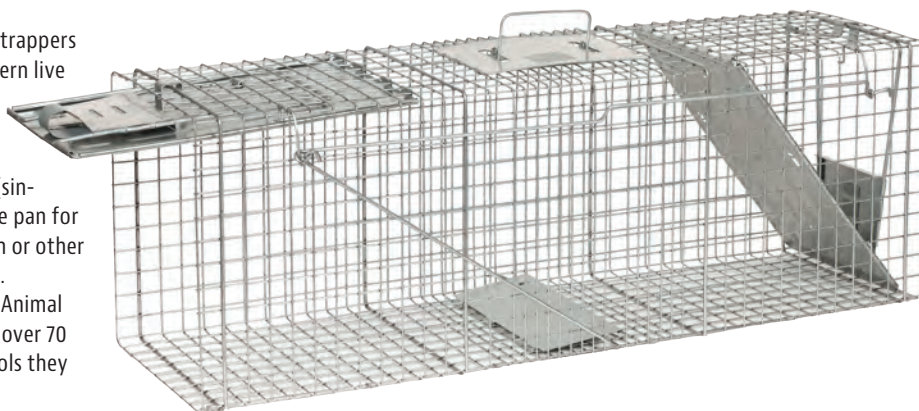
BOX TRAPS

Box traps, often called live traps, have been around about as long as fur trappers have. Originally made of wood pegged, nailed or screwed together, modern live traps are typically made of heavy-duty wire, making them much lighter and easier to transport than their early, handmade predecessors.

A box trap works by having an opening at one or both ends and a trip pan either in the middle (double-door trap) or toward the opposite end (single-door trap). Bait is placed on the pan for two-door traps or behind the pan for the single-door variety, and the trap is super easy to set. When a raccoon or other animal steps on the pan, the door closes behind it, securing it in the trap.

One great box trap for trapping raccoons is the Easy Set Large 1-Door Animal Trap from Havahart. A leader in the manufacture of live animal traps for over 70 years, Havahart has continued to improve their traps to the effective tools they are today.

The Large 1-Door trap features the company's patented easy-set design that allows users to set the trap with just one hand. An enlarged steel plate and handle on the top of the trap minimizes risk of contact with the animal, and smooth, rolled trap edges protect the trapped animal from injury. A sensitivity screw attached to the trip pan even lets the user tailor the trap to the target animal.



Of course, this trap is prone to catching more than just raccoons. Armadillos, groundhogs, muskrats, nutria, opossums and skunks can also be caught in the trap, as well as the occasional house cat or feral cat looking for an easy meal. However, it's simple to release those animals unharmed if desired.

SKINNING KNIFE

While it might seem obvious, if your customers decide to trap raccoons for the fur, they're going to need a good skinning knife, which might just lead to an extra sale. Skinning raccoons isn't terribly difficult, but a knife designed for the purpose makes the job much easier.

One knife that can make that job much quicker and easier for your customers is the RazorCape from Outdoor Edge. The RazorCape is a lightweight knife that features two replaceable, scalpel-sharp, 3-inch skinning blades to perform the intricate task of skinning an animal.

The blades are made from Japanese 420J2 stainless steel and hand-finished to achieve their razor-sharp edges. They are seated in a black oxide-coated steel blade holder, providing the strength of a traditional knife. The handle is constructed from a lightweight, one-piece, non-slip Grivory polymer. The stainless steel blades have a Rockwell-C Hardness (HRC) rating of 55-56, offering great control and precision, along with better edge retention.

Incredibly, even with its 7.1-inch overall length, the knife weighs just 2 ounces. And changing the blades is not only super easy, but doing so eliminates the need for sharpening — a task many of us loathe.

As a bonus, this knife also has a lot to offer big game hunters. Along with the 3-inch skinning blades, it also comes with two replaceable, scalpel-sharp, 3-inch drop-point blades suited for the heavy lifting of field dressing and quartering your game, along with a single 3-inch gutting blade to effortlessly cut beneath the hide without piercing internal organs. **HR**



11 Lightweight Hunting Boots to Step Up Your Sales

Spring will be here before you know it, and hunters will be searching for that perfect pair of boots to hit the woods in.

BY KEVIN REESE

As a Marine for eight years and factory worker for another 16 years — and the son of a factory worker who preached religiously about the importance of good boots — I understood all too well that my feet were my money makers. Heck, as an outdoor writer, my feet continue to pay a paramount role in my outdoor adventures. Who I am and what I do often continue to relate to what I put on my feet. I remain a passionate advocate for footcare, especially as it relates to shoe and boot choices. On the hunt, whether I'm climbing up into treestands in my home state of Texas or walking miles across fingers and draws out West, what I wear definitely matters, and I'm not alone in that widely-known truth. More hunters are focused on good hunting boots than ever before. Check out these 11 amazing lightweight hunting boots selected to help you step into higher sales.



THOROGOOD INFINITY FD DRAKAR 7

Thorogood's take is simple: "The foundation you stand on is only as good as what you're standing in." This simple truth is, to use Thorogood's word choice, foundational to why good people have endeavored to make great boots for the past 130 years, and they are still hard at work innovating and producing the kind of footwear boots-on-the-ground workers and hunters continue to trust. The Infinity FD Drakar 7 is a fitting example.

This lightweight, non-insulated, 7-inch boot is incredibly rich in features including premium leather construction, 51-percent welt construction for enhanced flex and stability, composite shank and a removable, anti-friction footbed. For all-day, mile-after-mile comfort, confidence and reliability, the FD Drakar 7 also boasts a self-cleaning Infinity FD Flex-Drive midsole and outsole. www.thorogoodusa.com





LACROSSE ATLAS

Originally founded in Lacrosse, Wisconsin, Lacrosse Footwear has been wrapping feet in comfort and protection for over 125 years, and it offers a litany of models; however, in terms of lightweight comfort, durability and affordability, it's tough to beat Lacrosse Atlas boots.

Perfect for hunting in mild to colder temperatures, Atlas delivers big on protection and stability with features like a DuraFit molded-rubber heel, rubber toe cap, polyurethane footbed, thermoplastic polyurethane (TPU) shank and LXG rubber Infinitrac outsole lugs. For comfort, the Atlas boasts Dry-Core waterproofing and 400-gram PrimaLoft insulation. The Atlas' abrasion-resistant exterior is comprised of nubuck leather and Mossy Oak Break-Up Country camouflage. www.lacrossefootwear.com



ROCKY LYNX

Lightweight, waterproof and designed for cold- to mild-temperature hunting adventures, 8-inch Rocky Lynx boots provide protection and comfort via a proprietary Recycled Vapor Pass Waterproof Technology and 400-gram 3M Thinsulate insulation. Rocky Lynx boots also feature full-grain leather trim and Cordura construction, Lynx All-Terrain outsole, Rocky Rebound footbed, fiberglass shank and cushioned EVA midsole. More than just another hunting boot, you just might see your customers laced up in Rocky Lynx boots for everyday wear.

www.rockyboots.com



DANNER VITAL

Danner FullBore boots have been my go-to range footwear for years now, and as much as I have tried to destroy them, they still look near-new — considering my Jarhead approach to destroying things, it's certainly a testament to durability.

Lightweight and compact, with an 8-inch height, Danner Vital boots are a solid choice for hunters looking for non-insulated, mild-weather comfort and waterproof, peace-of-mind durability. Danner's Vital boot features an abrasion-resistant leather and 900-denier polyester fabric upper, open-cell polyurethane footbed, Plyolite midsole, multi-density foam interior, Danner Dry liner, mesh-lined tongue, Lock & Load lacing system and Vital outsole. www.danner.com

LACROSSE AEROHEAD SPORT 3.5MM

Whether your customers are heading out for a rainy-day hunt or trekking through marshes, AeroHead Sport 3.5mm, 16-inch rubber boots are a solid choice.

Sure, hunters reap the benefits of Lacrosse's 125-year legacy of craftsmanship, but they also are sure to experience solid foot support, all-day comfort and the waterproof reliability hunters demand in wet environments. With the AeroHead's 3.5mm neoprene insulation, these lightweight boots also handle cold weather exceptionally well. AeroHead Sport boots feature waterproof neoprene construction, ethylene-vinyl acetate (EVA) footbed, polypropylene shank, neoprene gusset and adjustable calf-strap, Jersey-knit liner, all-terrain/all-season outsole and Realtree Timber camouflage.



DANNER SAN ANGELO SNAKE BOOT

The San Angelo (Square-Toe) Snake Boot has been my go-to hog hunting boot for several years now. These non-insulated boots are lightweight, yet also offer peace-of-mind protection in snake country. The San Angelo's durability, constructed of full-grain leather and water-repellant nylon panels, has resulted in low maintenance and reliability.

These boots offer lightweight yet robust, 360-degree snake-bite protection, from the toes to knees via a protective layer. The boot also features ultra-comfortable leather lining and EVA footbed, stitch-down construction and steel shank for increased stability. Hunters will be hard-pressed to find a better all-around, mild-weather comfort and protection solution — and who doesn't like a heavy nod to traditional western styling?





IRISH SETTER PINNACLE

Capitalizing on Irish Setter's reputation for producing top-tier lightweight hunting boots for decades, the Pinnacle line was introduced in 2021. The 7-inch Pinnacle boot features UltraDry waterproofing, ScentBan technology, ENER high-rebound material, Cushin Comfort tongue, ScentBan, ArmaTec protective material and Trout Brook full-grain leather. Making a better boot the best also means adding an antimicrobial lining, ATCC outsole and TempSens technology. TempSens cools the foot in warm weather and retains body heat in cold weather. Irish Setter's latest, greatest Pinnacle boot is sure to be the perfect fit for your most seasoned veteran boot-snob hunters... but they're affordable to boot. www.irishsetterboots.com

IRISH SETTER VAPRTREK

Irish Setter has built a reputation for producing premium hunting boots over more than 70 years. The Vaprtrek line is a great representation of time-tested drive, advancing technologies and passion to deliver uncompromising comfort and reliability footwear solutions.

Perfect for run-and-gun, mild-weather pursuits, Vaprtrek 8-inch boots boast Trout Brook full-grain, Earth Field Camo leather and ArmaTec abrasion-resistant fabric construction, UltraDry waterproofing, ScentBan technology, ultra-comfortable ENER material and memory-foam insole, synthetic-mesh lining, nylon shank, CuShin Comfort tongue and lightweight RPM R-Zone outsole.

LOWA Z-6S GTX C

Bavarian cobbler Lorenz Wagner gave LOWA legs in 1923, and LOWA produced alpine-style boots for decades. Today, the LOWA Z-6X GTX C comforts the feet of hunters around the globe.

LOWA Z-6S GTX C boots are rugged, lightweight, ridiculously comfortable, exceptionally durable and made to stand up to years of all-terrain hunting adventures. Z-6S GTX C boots boast waterproof GORE-TEX protection, split leather and rugged fabric construction, LOWA Antistatic insole, double-injection DuraPU midsole and a slip-resistant Tactical Z TRAC outsole. If your customers are looking for top-tier, bang-for-their-bucks quality and construction LOWA Z-6S GTX C boots may be a perfect fit. www.lowaboots.com

KENETREK MOUNTAIN GUIDE NI

For nearly 20 years, Jim Winjum and fellow founder Bob Sherer, both avid high-country sheep hunters, have endeavored to design a better boot. Today, Kenetrek boots are regarded by veteran hunters as one of the best footwear producers in the industry.

Among Kenetrek's most popular offerings, the Mountain Guide NI is a solid choice for your demanding hunting customers. Kenetrek spares no fit, form or function expense, cuts no corners and expects no-defect production.

Mountain Guide NI (non-insulated) 10-inch Boots are great mild-weather hunting boot examples of such brand hallmarks, featuring 2.8mm-thick, premium, full-grain leather uppers; vertically seamless tongue for enhanced waterproofing and abrasion resistance; double- and triple-stitching at high-wear points; protective rubber toe caps; hinged and fixed speed lace system; Windtex breathable waterproofing technology; 7mm midsole support and positive-traction Custom K-73 outsoles.

www.kenetrek.com



ROCKY PROLIGHT SNAKE BOOT

Through more than six years of non-stop abuse, my Rocky snake boots protected me from all manner of venomous snakes at home in Texas and in a number of other states. I walked countless miles in those boots and they remain another favorite, although hunters today should be stepping up into the brand's much-improved ProLight offering.

Nearly knee-high at 16 inches, Rocky ProLight Snake Boots are designed to provide 360-degree protection from most venomous snakes, including everything I have encountered in the Lone Star State, from the toes clear up to the gusset. Designed for mild-weather hunting, non-insulated Rocky ProLight Snake Boots include polyurethane outsoles, full-grain leather trim and rugged, waterproof nylon panels finished in Mossy Oak camouflage.



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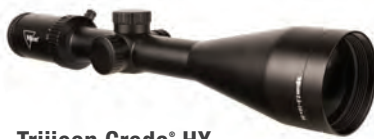
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WOOX

WOOX is capitalizing on the pandemic-inspired renewed interest in hunting by combining classic wood with modern styling and uses.



BY HUNTING RETAILER STAFF

Having only entered the market a few years ago, WOOX quickly made a splash with its classic wood stocks made for modern firearms, and the company has continued to innovate from there. We spoke with Chip Hunnicutt, WOOX’s general manager and vice president of marketing, to talk about the company’s role in the industry and what it expects moving forward.

HR: Can you talk about the com-

pany’s history and its place in the industry today?

CH: WOOX was started in 2019 by Danilo Minelli, the family behind Minelli Group, an Italian company started in 1937 by Francesco Minelli and his three sons in northern Italy. While WOOX is recently established, this “wild child” of Minelli Group has 85 years of woodcrafting and manufacturing experience. WOOX is headquartered in Hickory, North Carolina, with products made in Italy and the

USA. Minelli Group had an office here, but WOOX quickly outgrew the shared space and opened its own office and assembly plant nearby, and this is where we fulfill orders for customers across the country today.

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

CH: WOOX rifle stocks were immediate hits. The combination of a modular chassis with Italian-designed wood stocks gets a lot of



↑ Chip Hunnicutt





↑ The Furiosa chassis is the flagship stock of WOOX's line.

attention. Shooters long for the classic feel of wood that's also smartly designed with the full functionality of polymer stocks. By far, the Furiosa is the most popular stock and a great introduction to the world of WOOX for outdoorsmen and women exploring truly premium outdoor gear.

HR: Is there developing technology that might change the way shooters buy or use stocks or cutting implements in the future?

CH: The modularity aspect of the WOOX chassis enables our design team to focus on the stock components. One piece, the monoblock, is

designed one time for compatibility with multiple forend and shoulder stock designs that can be attached to it.

Like our wood gun stocks, WOOX cutlery has benefitted from our relationship with Minelli Group, an 85-year-old leader in woodcrafting. When chosen meticulously, treated respectfully, and designed innovatively, wood surpasses other materials in beauty and performance. That manufacturing experience is apparent in our supply chain, the tools for creating our products, the materials, and coatings.

HR: Have the recent supply chain problems translated into supply issues in your corner of the industry?

CH: Like most everyone, WOOX has been affected by the ongoing worldwide supply chain issues. Most pronounced have been logistics related — getting the Italian-built products to our North Carolina assembly and distribution center.

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

CH: If anything good came from the pandemic, it's been the increased



↑ WOOX's Solo axes and Leggenda knife (top)



numbers getting out to explore the outdoors. The premium outdoor gear space has seen much innovation, with WOOX right in the thick of it. Gun owners will continue to add to their collections with firearms dedicated to their pursuits rather than single guns for multiple uses. Similarly, premium cutlery for the outdoors that appreciate with use will continue to be popular as a user's experience outside grows.

HR: Where does WOOX see potential for growth? How about non-growth? Is there part of the industry that's shrinking?

CH: Our growth relies squarely on our ability to add compatibility for our chassis. On a near-daily basis, we get questions from shooters wanting to add our stocks to their rifle, shotgun, AR and even grip panels for handguns. The interest from the



industry is just as encouraging, as manufacturers continue to approach us about collaborations.

More broadly, personalization is where we see things going. Manufacturers are smartly adding custom shops to their online stores, coating and decoration options are as popular as ever with new patterns and colors being released every season, and we're meeting customer expectations before and after the purchase, wherever that purchase occurs.

“If it’s sharp or scary or can merely be attached to a product, even to make that product safer, it remains a violation of advertising terms.”

What’s shrinking? Advertising options. Social media and search continue to broadly define what’s permissible. If it’s sharp or scary or can merely be attached to a product, even to make that product safer, it remains a violation of advertising terms. I’m not worried about the loss of access to social media advertising; if you’re building a brand like we are at WOOX, it’s one tool in a balanced portfolio, and not even the best one. Creativity is paramount, because if it’s not noticed, it doesn’t matter what you do.

HR: What can we expect out of Woox in the first half of 2023? What products have you most excited for the future?

CH: While we don’t comment on unannounced products, I can relay we’ve got a packed roadmap that will keep us busy all year. In the first half, we anticipate shipping the Ruger American chassis, opening up our full line of stocks to that platform’s customer base. We’ll also see the Gladiatore ship, our first entry for shotguns.

HR: How does Woox support its dealers?

→ Though the rifle chassis are a huge part of WOOX’s success, the company’s cutting implements have been big sellers, too.

CH: WOOX provides a wholesale website for ordering direct any time of day, and we have a variety of downloadable marketing assets. Our sales team members are available to educate dealer staff and provide demonstrations. Co-branding is available to dealers who would like to see their logo on our products, and we have incentive programs for dealer sales teams.

HR: Do you have any advice for retailers about selling gunstocks and Woox products specifically?

CH: Our most successful dealers display a full gun build using our stocks. There’s just no better way for a customer to envision their own rifle in a beautiful WOOX than seeing and holding an example build.



We also suggest dealers keep our full compatibility list handy, either for customers to see or, at a minimum, for staff to readily answer questions. In many instances, a dealer will produce a recent rifle target that reinforces the accuracy improvement a customer can expect from a WOOX.

HR: What’s your personal favorite Woox product, and why?

CH: Right now I’m loving the Bad Boy knife. It’s a fixed blade for everyday carry, which, to my genuine surprise, has replaced the trusty folder I kept inside a pocket. Mine is the drop point version, and the size and wicked sharp blade has done double duty as a skinner on my fall hunts.

HR: Is there anything you’d like retailers to know about Woox and its products?

CH: WOOX is coming into the market at a time when hunting interest is at a high, with products that place a premium on quality derived from experience in the craft — these are stocks, knives and axes your heirs will fight over, and that’s why we back them with 100 years of service support. **HR**



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www.weatherby.com



Move the Morale Needle Up

Nothing makes employees happy like money — but good morale can't be bought. It's all about the little things.

BY MICHAEL D. FAW

It's a basic business math equation: Employee morale + customer service skills = increased sales. And hopefully profits. When your employees start having low morale issues, however, you may have a problem. In these stressful times, employee morale issues are coming up more frequently.

While everyone has a bad day every now and then, ongoing bad attitudes among your employees are often revealed to customers in negative comments — or a lack of service. The negative comments or actions, and lack of professional customer service, are definitely not the best situation for a business. Customers can be turned off by employees with negative attitudes, and those customers could begin shopping elsewhere. Where does the morale needle point in your business? Is it good overall, in the middle with some employees, or are you seeing lots of frowns? Those frowns could be worn by employees — or quickly exiting customers.

When morale is high and everyone is in on the team effort, not only will

sales and profits increase but absenteeism and employee turnover will be down—or nonexistent. High morale is a key to keeping employees happy and productive and working to serve customers.

DISCOVER THE ISSUES

Sometimes employees just have bad days, but low-morale employees could be bringing personal life and home problems to work with them. Recognize that many factors lead to stress, and everyone deals with these factors differently.

Providing break periods, and being certain employees take those breaks, can help reduce some stresses. Unfortunately, in today's constant-contact world, cellphones and emails help keep stress levels high by allowing problems to follow employees no matter where they go. While some companies have rules that no personal calls or cellphone use can be allowed during work hours, most employees know to stay off the phone and on the job. You be the

↑ Loaning equipment to employees for use in the field can be a great perk and a show of goodwill.





↑ A regular employee range day might be a nice way to bring the team together.

judge and set the cellphone and online rules in your business.

The size of your company will determine whether you can offer — and afford — the full spectrum of benefits that include health and wellness benefits, or enhanced options such as yoga classes and meditation periods to reduce stress. If you have an outside contracted human resource and benefits provider, ask about your options. Once you narrow down the employees with low morale and their issues, don't call them out in front of other employees, but do begin to take corrective actions to help them — and reduce low morale in the workplace.

UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU LEARN

Once you know the problem, note that home-related and personal issues tend to pass over time. You may not need to take action, but do stay aware of the employee's issues.

Legal issues, such as a hunting

citation or a DUI, take months to resolve, and interaction with court systems can sometimes sour those who were once good employees. You will have to judge what is said (there are two sides to everything) and what to do. Have an open mind, but be the judge if a bad attitude is causing customers to leave because of a negative employee. How much information your employee can or should reveal is a gray area, but discussion with most employees about the problem often starts the corrective process.

STEPS TO SOLVING THE PROBLEM

Once you know the issues, corrective options include coaching any low-morale employees and encouraging them to take time off, settle and resolve issues away from work, or leave their chips at the door. Employees are paid to perform at expected levels, and if one is underperforming, have a conversation and follow-up discussion(s) as needed. Other employees might make comments about underperforming employees because they have to pick up the work load or because the negative employee is



↑ Even perks like an on-site lunch won't improve morale if your team sees low-performing employees taking advantage of the hard workers and getting away with it.

affecting them in some other way.

Listen carefully to what your all employees say and don't say. What you learn will help you make decisions ranging from releasing the employee or taking other corrective actions. Remember that morale issues are often personal matters (non-work related), and even if another employee knows or brings up the matter about the troubled employee, never discuss personal matters of employees with other employees. Private issues should remain private.

IMPROVING MORALE IS PART OF GOOD BUSINESS

It's a fact that no employee wants to work in any business where the motto from management is "work, work, work!". Remember, the hunting industry is based on discretionary income and setting aside time to do things hunters enjoy. These are probably the same things your employees like to do, because most employees select a job in a market segment that they enjoy. Yes, there are those who work only for paychecks and see a job as just a job. You can quickly identify those employees. Hopefully, most of your employees know what the goods you sell mean to your customers and like working



with and meeting other hunters.

For your employees who like to hunt, offering flexible hours during hunting seasons can be a morale-boosting action for many. Remember also that on opening day or opening week for hunting seasons, the sales in your business will probably be down, because your customers are away — they are in the woods. Take note of which employees like to hunt which species, so if needed, you can rotate flexible hours based on those who likes to hunt deer vs. waterfowl vs. elk or upland birds.

You will probably see that some employees like to take vacation during opening week or peak hunting periods during the seasons. Make a calendar if you must so employees can sign up for planned hunts and schedule work times so everyone won't be gone at once. Keep the calendar as a reminder that you can adjust on an annual basis. Permitting time off to hunt can create more

of a team environment and makes employees feel valued and listened to — and it improves morale.

Consider organizing an employee dove hunt or deer-hunting camp on your closed days of the week. If you have new employees who lack gear, you could consider offering loaners or discounts to help them gear up and participate. Note also that females and minorities are growing hunting market segments, and these employees should be invited and included. Take photos of these events to share with the group and post in the employee break room. Remember to keep employee photos professional and not to ridicule someone who made a key mistake off premises.

Employees also like to be recognized, and you can do this on your social channels or bulletin boards for employees of the month or quarter, or congratulations if they earn degrees or complete a sales course provided by a supplier. The reasons



↑ Your employees probably hunt in their off time. Schedule carefully so everyone gets a chance for some vacation time but the store is still staffed.

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to recognize employees are nearly unlimited, and these small steps make big differences in morale in the workplace.

After the recent closed business environment across much of America, more and more employees rolled into the work-from-home segment. This option is obviously not available for your show floor sales team or range managers, and all employees in your business who must be present to serve customers. When and if you can permit other employees to work from home, this option — if used only a day or more a month — can improve morale. Sending employees to work-away, whether it be looking at competitors, taking training, or testing hunting rifles or shotguns at a range, can create a valuable workday for some. These breaks away from the store or off the sales floor can increase morale.

Employees also like to stay informed and engaged, so be certain

"Make a calendar if you must so employees can sign up for planned hunts and schedule work times so everyone won't be gone at once."

to communicate regularly about incoming new products or resupplies, when a store will possibly be reconfigured inside with new displays or sales areas, or if there will be more employees joining the team. Keeping all employees informed avoids the negative rumor mills from grinding out misinformation. Rumors can often pull down morale.

During slower periods, simple

gestures of thanks do make a difference. If you schedule a provided breakfast — and you as the owner cooks the meal or helps serve a catered meal — this type of action can improve teamwork. Off-site or casual behind-the-store cookouts with rotating breaks for working staff show that you work at creating a fun working environment. Provided an unannounced lunch or supply of free snacks in the break room (or special coffee and tea break during mid-morning), or providing all employees with a company logoed hat or T-shirts or discounts on hunting gear can help employees feel more valued and drive up that team member esprit de corps. Test the waters and see what works best and what receives a lukewarm reception.

Remember to also recognize important dates for employees, such as work anniversaries and birthdays. Make it a point to invite all employees to join in the recogni-

tion and any event on these days. Also make it a point to recognize those who go above and beyond in customer service, complete the most sales in a month, and such efforts that show initiative. You can also make employees feel more invested in the overall efforts by asking their input on projects, such as building seasonal displays, or types of instruction classes to offer. If an employee wants to earn hunter education instructor certification so she or he can teach courses, consider allowing this sort of effort to be paid work time. Remember, it's the small things that add up as morale boosters.

As with all things that improve your business and the environment within the walls of your retail center, judging morale and improving it — or keeping the positive morale at a high level — will require efforts on your part. Don't wait for morale to become low or very negative. Take steps to keep it high and profits will follow. **HR**

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7 Deadly Sins Employees Commit



Photo: Bill Konway

Human resources issues can drive a small-business owner up the wall, but here's how to address seven of the most common problems.

BY JIM KNEISZEL

This winter, hunting seasons are wrapping up. The phone keeps ringing with customers who've had problems with their guns or want an end-of-the-season cleaning and tune-up. It feels like spring will never get here. The cold is miserable and your team is working harder than ever.

Frustrating workplace issues don't make it any easier to cope with the stresses of a busy season. But distractions, bad behavior and motivation problems can crop up and test the abilities of small-business owners and managers to keep work running smoothly.

Here are seven deadly sins you may encounter with your crew, along with suggestions on how to keep these problems from hurting your company's productivity:

THE SIN: SMARTPHONE ABUSE

The salvation: Could this be the biggest human resources issue of our generation? The phone is now viewed as a constant lifeline to family and friends, and it gets harder to curtail employee use every day. But maintaining workplace productivity demands limiting cellphone use on company time. Consider a policy that restricts phone use to emergency situations and limits or forbids personal texting, tweets, social media posts, Snapchats, etc., during the work shift. Protect employees, equipment and your business by instituting harsh penalties for workers who talk or text while driving a company vehicle or operating equipment. At



Photo: John Hafner





this point, it's probably unrealistic to start a policy requiring employees to turn off the phone completely.

THE SIN: TARDINESS

The salvation: If you don't already use one, you could bring in a time clock and dock pay for punching in late. That may seem like an extreme measure, especially if you run a small operation where good employees have always been trusted to track their time more informally. Explore incentives you can offer for employees who show up on time every day for a month, quarter or year. If you see a pattern of tardiness in one employee, don't let it linger. Take action to reprimand the offender early or risk the problem getting worse and spreading to other employees.

THE SIN: POOR INTERACTION WITH CUSTOMERS AND COWORKERS

The salvation: Institute a random

call-monitoring program where you listen in to the receptionist's interaction with customers and share feedback. Do this for an hour or two every quarter. Take notes on how workers treat customers and answer their questions. Survey gunsmithing customers randomly after the service and ask if the smith was courteous, helpful and informative. Keep all your notes on file for periodic reviews or future justification for employee termination. Take seriously any complaints you receive about how employees are treating each other. The job can be stressful, but you cannot tolerate employees not showing each other respect.

THE SIN: CARELESSNESS WITH EQUIPMENT

The salvation: There is a two-prong solution to making sure employees aren't too rough with equipment and inventory. First, institute a daily or weekly inspection checklist for

↑ Service and safety should be top priority for your staff. A grouch behind the counter will take a toll on your reputation.

equipment. Have your staff note scuffs and scratches, dings and dents. If you have company trucks, require washing the outside of vehicles and clean out and vacuum the cab. Ask staffers to check over each other's gear and equipment if possible. Part two is to hold weekly or monthly meetings to discuss an aspect of the proper care of all your equipment. These meetings will reinforce the priority to care for the inventory.

THE SIN: PREVENTABLE WORKPLACE INJURY

The salvation: Horseplay and poor lifting techniques can put workers out of commission, costing your company time and money and bringing added stress from unexpected short staffing. Make it clear

you don't like impromptu games of dodgeball between rows of boxes in the warehouse. Hold safety sessions that stress proper gun handling and lifting of heavy boxes.

THE SIN: NOT-SO-GREAT SERVICE

The salvation: Constantly review protocols to ensure consistently good service. Follow and spot-check your crew and grade their performance. Seek customer feedback to address issues of cleanliness, friendliness or overly aggressive selling before they take a toll on your reputation. Log and track complaints by sales associate and look for ways to reward your top performers with bonuses or tokens of your appreciation. Convince workers that a culture of helpfulness will make your company a leader and translate into more financial rewards for everyone.

THE SIN: DOING THE BARE MINIMUM

The salvation: Watch for workers who don't take the initiative to do more than the minimum amount of work to keep their jobs. Challenge workers to go beyond their job descriptions if it means satisfying a customer. Foster an attitude of teamwork among your crew members. It should be "all for one and one for all" to get the job done during hectic winter days. To stay profitable, you can't let anyone cop a "not my job" attitude. Hold workers accountable for their actions, and when employees do outstanding work, find a way to reward them.

ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE

While you may encounter any one of these issues from time to time, most of you are fortunate to have good employees up and down the ranks. These are folks you're proud to work with every day.

So many great workers — from gunsmiths to sales associates to office staff — keep a retail shop humming along. It's important to remember that and recognize your team this time of year, when they're putting in long hours to meet demand. **HR**







ALWAYS MOVING FORWARD: **WEATHERBY INC.**

With some big introductions in the past year and more to come in 2023, Weatherby is marching into a bright future.



BY BRIAN MCCOMBIE

When Weatherby moved its facilities from California to Wyoming in the summer of 2018, hunters, shooters and independent FFLs might have thought the iconic gun maker could take a stutter-step or two. After all, relocating and restructuring take time and focus.

But that didn't happen. Actually, the move appears to have provided Weatherby with a new vitality, as seen in the introduction of many new products in 2022, with much more to come in 2023.

And, as always Weatherby has maintained its commitment to providing its dealers not only with product but in-store and larger marketing efforts to help move its many product lines.

"Weatherby's dealer business has increased in the last few years," Luke Thorkildsen, vice president

of sales, marketing, and product development, told *Hunting Retailer*. "We are committed to growing our stocking dealers and making sure consumers that are looking for our products can find them at retail. We have most of our top ammo SKUs in stock and ready to ship, too."

First, though, the "new" from Weatherby. One big addition was the gun maker's introduction of a whole new caliber: the 338 WBY RPM, Weatherby's 16th cartridge introduction.

The RPM stands for Rebated Precision Magnum, and Weatherby launched its first such cartridge in 2019 with the 6.5 WBY RPM. As Weatherby noted at the time, "Weatherby has traditionally designed and built ultra-high velocity cartridges with unique case designs — belted magnums with a double-radius shoulder. ... The Mark





← The Backcountry 2.0 Carbon Steel

V six-lug standard action has been one of our best-kept secrets for years. The goal of the 6.5 WBY RPM was initially based on maximizing the potential of this great lightweight action.”

Those belted magnum cartridges were handled by Weatherby’s nine-lug actions, which of course were found in heavier rifles. But how to fit a true magnum round into a lighter-weight, much handier rifle like the Mark V six-lug options?

The answer is a rebated rim, which is much smaller in diameter than the base of the case. This smaller-diameter rim allowed Weatherby to build this magnum-powered 6.5 round to fit the reduced size 6-lug action found in Weatherby’s sub-5-pound rifle, the Mark V Backcountry Ti. For the 6.5 WBY RPM, that meant magnum velocities right at or above a blistering 3,000 feet per second (fps) with a 140-grain bullet and an amazing 3,200 fps with a 127-grain projectile.

Like its 6.5 predecessor, the new 338 WBY RPM features the rebated rim — and magnum punch. Consider these specifications, with the 338 WBY RPM available in four different load options and fired from a Weatherby Backcountry 2.0 Ti in both the short barrel, 18-inch, configuration and the longer option of a 24-inch barrel:

338 WBY RPM Muzzle Velocities

BULLET	24 BARREL	18 BARREL
185 gr. Barnes TTSX.....	3100	2860
225 gr. Barnes TTSX	2800	2615
225 gr. Hornady Interlock.....	2825	2655
225 gr. Nosler Accubond	2800	2660

All of this equates to some very serious power for very serious big-game hunters, a Weatherby trademark that founder Roy Weatherby pioneered decades ago.

For 2022, Weatherby also offered the Mark V in Left-Handed Standard Action. Weatherby had lefty models available in Mark V nine-lug bolt models for years. With the success of the Mark V Backcountry line of rifles, Weatherby received many, many requests for the smaller six-lug action in a left-handed



← The 6.5 WBY RPM was Weatherby’s first Rebated Precision Magnum round, created to maximize the potential of the company’s Mark V six-lug action. The new .338 WBY RPM uses the same smaller-diameter rim.

version, and lefty versions are now an option in the Backcountry lineup.

October 2022 saw Weatherby launch its new 3-inch Synthetic 18i semi-auto shotgun models. The 3-inch Synthetic 18i’s were offered in First Lite Cipher, Mossy Oak Habitat, Realtree Max-7 and Synthetic Black.

Built in Italy to Weatherby’s exacting design standards, the 18i’s use a proven inertia operating system to deliver an evenly weighted shotgun. Instead of porting off gasses from

the combustion like a gas-operated shotgun, this action harnesses the energy of the recoiling gun to run its bolt. With no powder rerouted into the gun, the result is a cleaner-running, low-maintenance shotgun, perfect for high-volume shooting.

The 18i’s one-piece receiver is precision machined from billet aluminum for strength and simplicity. The 18i is shipped with five choke tubes and a proper choke tube wrench.

So, what can the independent FFL expect from Weatherby to help



← The 18i shotgun

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Sheridan, WY 82801

Adam Weatherby, President
Hours: Mon-Fri 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. MST
Customer Service: 307-675-7840
Instagram: @WeatherbyInc
YouTube: /WeatherbyInc
FB: /WeatherbyInc
Website: weatherby.com
For new dealer inquiries:
orders@weatherby.com

the retailer sell the company's ever-growing lineup of firearms, ammunition, accessories and clothing? A great deal, it turns out, from in-store help to Weatherby keeping its name out and about on the social media landscape to most everything else marketing-wise in between.

First, Weatherby sells direct to dealer and through all the major firearms distributors.

"Our sales team works with all of our retailers to provide assets that help them sell Weatherby Firearms," said Tyler Grethen, Weatherby marketing manager. "Those assets include territorial representatives with a real knowledge of the local markets, and staff training materials to improve product knowledge for managers and salespeople. Plus we offer Weatherby signage and product demonstrations."

Weatherby also offers a Dealer Employee Discount program so sales staff can purchase Weatherby products directly and at a deep discount compared to retail prices.

"On the marketing side, we have a full 360 marketing plan that includes print, digital, podcasts, email programs and conservation sponsorships/banquets," Grethen noted. Weatherby also has a good number of "Ambassador Partnerships" with

companies including Meat Eater and hunting apparel maker Hushin.

"These Ambassador Partners do testing of our gear, provide feedback for us, and produce content that is seen by millions of consumers via their social media and digital outreach," Grethen noted.

The Weatherby "On Our Mark" podcast is another avenue the company uses to create interest in their products and hunting, shooting and wildlife conservation. Here, Weatherby hosts and guests talk ballistics, products and hunting stories. Recent On Our Mark podcasts, for example, have featured Weatherby President Adam Weatherby discussing his first-ever African safari with noted outdoor and firearms writer Joseph Von Benedict.

Other podcasts have covered topics as diverse as beginning waterfowl hunting, the launch of the Mark V Backcountry 2.0 rifle, conservation issues and falconry.

"We also produce some of the best hunting videos and then provide educational content via YouTube," Grethen added. Weatherby YouTube videos have run the gamut of subjects and issues. One video, for example, presented a Weatherby mule deer hunting trip and delved into the ongoing conservation work needed to keep populations of these iconic Western deer strong and growing. Other videos have introduced new Weatherby rifles and calibers, and there are even field-test videos of new products. The latter includes a video documenting the first game animal taken by the 338 WBY RPM, a very large black bear hunted in the Bighorn Mountains of Wyoming (pictured on this page and in the opening photo of this article).

In 2022, Weatherby product reviews and Weatherby product-based hunting stories were featured in all the major consumer hunting magazine and websites, including the NRA's *American Hunter*, *Field & Stream*, *Gun Dog Magazine* and *Wide Open Spaces*.

Weatherby is also no stranger to social media and has invested a great deal of energy into sharing the



Weatherby story and experience on social media venues.

In fact, when Weatherby launched the left-handed Mark V models in 2022, the first announcement of the new rifles arrived via the gunmaker's Instagram account with this posting:

"We like to call them 10% of the population but 90% of the internet. In honor of #nationallefthandersday we've got an announcement. The much-awaited Mark V 6-lug is now available in left-handed!"

On the ground, so to speak, Weatherby staff attend a wide variety of trade, sales and consumer shows. Sales shows include Ahlman's Shooter's Roundup, the Big Rock Show, Bill Hicks, the National Association of Sporting Goods Wholesalers, Nation's Best Sports, and more.

For consumer events, Weatherby

products and staff can be found at venues hosted by the Dallas Safari Club, Delta Waterfowl, the Hunt Expo, Northwest Pacific Sportsman and SCI Reno.

And Weatherby is not standing still for 2023. Soon, the gunmaker will launch its newest rifle, the Model 307. At this writing, details are minimal. But what we know for sure is that the Model 307 is a bolt-action platform offered in a wide range of WBY and non-WBY calibers. Pricewise, the rifle is expected to retail somewhere between the Mark V and Vanguard lines.

Expect much more to come from Weatherby in 2023 and beyond. Innovation, passion and an ever-growing marketing presence in the industry: That's the Weatherby formula for success. **HR**





A NEED FOR FEED

Wildlife feeders fill floor space and create important foot traffic.

BY KEVIN TATE

Locating, attracting and nurturing wildlife play key roles in your customers' enjoyment of the outdoors. Deciding which feeders to stock is key to doing the same for your customer relationships as well.

As whitetail populations have continued to expand nationwide, laws restricting the hunting of deer over bait have been relaxed correspondingly. While this certainly is not the only reason customers buy feeders, it's a significant and swiftly-growing portion of the market. This growth has accelerated innovation in the game feeder world, opening new and exciting possibilities. Today the feeder market is more varied and competitive than ever before. Deciding which feeders to stock means recognizing what balance among form, function, quality and price your own customers prefer.

The choice takes into account:

- Size and capacity
- Setup
- Functional style (spin cast or gravity)
- Quality
- Price

Price is determined by the considerations that come before it, but arriving at which feeder to buy is not determined by price tag alone.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Most feeders are used to distribute plain corn or corn mixed with other attractants. Corn is heavy. A bag that weighs 50 pounds sitting in the back of a truck will feel considerably heavier as it's being awkwardly held overhead and poured into a feeder. No matter what other considerations come into play, it's safe to assume customers will want to fill their feeders as infrequently as possible, but the size of the feeder must be balanced with the customer's budget. Besides price, why would someone want a feeder with a smaller capacity?

- Ease of setup and maneuverability
- Ease of transport

A feeder bound for a pasture can be any size at all, while a feeder bound for a hollow far back in the woods might need to ride there on an ATV. It might need to travel a steep, narrow trail that winds past brush and between trees. It might be used in a place that does not offer room for a large piece of equipment, and the customer might intend to handle setup and refilling all alone.





↑ When selling feeders, like most other products, it's important to strike a balance between what your customers want and what they're willing to spend.

As it is used, the customer might also plan to move the feeder around from time to time — either relocating it entirely from one spot to another, or moving it just far enough to put fresh ground beneath it. As a feeder is used by deer and other wildlife, the ground beneath it commonly becomes a muddy mess thanks to hoof traffic alone. Moving the feeder a few yards one way or another every few weeks is a simple, handy solution, but large feeders are heavy even when they're empty. When it comes time to pick up and move, the smaller the better.

SOME ASSEMBLY REQUIRED

Beyond attaching the legs and standing it upright, each step of assembly required to get a feeder up and running is a hassle customers won't welcome. Therefore, fewer parts to manipulate will always be better.

Gravity-fed feeders generally have no moving parts, which makes their assembly a snap. Spin-cast feeders have motorized parts to attach using simple tools that may or may not be included. Further, spin-cast feeders are powered by batteries. Some models call for disposable batteries, while others use a larger, rechargeable battery included with the feeder.

Stocking batteries for feeders is always a good idea, especially if the feeders you choose to carry require a special rechargeable version. Even with one battery included in the initial purchase, most users will prefer to keep a spare battery charged and change them out, rather than leave a feeder dormant while its one battery is charged back at home.

→ Feeders definitely take up space in the store. If you have room to spare, setting up a display model can draw attention and help sell.



TO SPIN OR NOT TO SPIN

Beyond selecting the largest feeder practical for their budget and application, customers must next choose between spin-cast and gravity-fed models, each of which has attributes unique to its style.

Spin feeders are generally more versatile than gravity-fed models. The number and duration of their feeding cycles are user-programmable. This lets the user better protect the feed from pests and the elements. It also allows the user to encourage deer and other wildlife to visit during daylight hours.



↑ Feeders come in a variety of types, from simple gravity-fed feeders to models with programmable timers and distribution. If you have room, stock a couple of each type.

Wildlife using a spin feeder can only eat what has been dispensed, which can make the feeder's contents last a lot longer. It also lets the user better time visits to refill the feed, since a little use will soon demonstrate how many feeding cycles are required to empty the reservoir.

Spin-cast feeders can also be set to throw feed in a specific direction as opposed to 360 degrees. Feeders might sometimes be placed in spots where feed thrown in every direction would scatter some of it into places deer won't readily use. Directional feeders are ideal for field corners and other places with limited open areas. They're also ideal for feeding fish, throwing feed only into the lake or pond while resting in a spot that's easily accessed.



↑ Even the more high-tech models are relatively simple, but it's smart to have someone on staff who knows how to operate your popular models and can show buyers the ropes.



Gravity feeders, while less versatile, have several advantages of their own, the first being simplicity. Gravity feeders have no moving parts and require no batteries. The wildlife that use them are free to eat as much as they want, whenever they want it, maximizing the potential herd nutrition, promoting the growth of antlers and production of milk.

Top-quality gravity-fed models are engineered to be easily accessible to deer while remaining difficult for raccoons and other varmints to abuse. The location and angles of their dispensing pipes work to make robbing the feeder difficult for small, unwanted guests.

KEEPING PESTS OUT

Discouraging unwanted animals

from bellying up to the bar is a challenge every feeder customer will face.

Spin-cast feeders dispense only so much feed at a time, giving the deer and turkeys a reasonable shot at eating it before the raccoons come along. These feeders can also be equipped with cages and guards that prevent raccoons and other varmints from turning the elements of the spin-cast motor by paw to serve themselves.

Since deer are invited to feed directly from the end of the dispensing pipes, gravity-fed feeders can't use varmint countermeasures like these. By engineering their feeders' outer surfaces to be smooth and strategically angled, the makers of gravity-fed feeders go a long way toward discouraging unwanted pests from making away with too much feed.

Varmints also come into consideration when deciding whether to stock what goes into a feeder. Liquid and powdered attractants meant to be mixed into corn or other grain are

a great addition to anyone's offerings. Stocking corn itself during the busiest hunting months of the year can also be fruitful, but store owners should be aware of the added pest control measures that may be necessary. The corn that will draw deer to your customers' feeders can draw rats into your store.

WHAT ELSE TO STOCK

Feeders bring considerable traffic to any hunting retailer's store, both on their own account and for a number of products customers use with them.

Related products to consider include:

- Corn
- Protein pellets and cubes
- Liquid and powdered attractants
- Game cameras and mounting options
- Batteries

Any retail floor display of feeders would be well-complemented by an associated selection of all of the above. **HR**





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Photo: mark Kingsbury





Turkey Decoy Adaptations

How to sell a turkey decoy for every hunting style your customers might use.

BY DAVID REARICK

Collapsible, inflatable, motion, laydown, strutter, half strutter, upright, feeder... the list goes on and on. For someone who isn't a grand-slamming turkey-hunting connoisseur, understanding what makes turkey decoy A better than decoy B and different than decoy C is a challenge that takes more than just reading the word-smithed description on the packing. While first-hand experience is best, for those that haven't reached expert-level quite yet, this guide will teach you to talk turkey without even knowing the language.

WHY DECOYS MATTER

First, the basics for those of you who aren't turkey hunters.

In the spring, the reason tom turkeys are vulnerable is simple: They are love-crazed and looking for a receptive hen. The mating ritual for turkeys starts with a tom gobbling on the roost, hens yelping in response and eventually flying to the base of his tree, and then the tom flying down to strut his stuff in courtship. This is what happens nearly every morning of the breeding season, especially when we are talking about the king of the roost.

What makes turkey hunting, and thus decoying, so unique is that hunters are attempting a role reversal, bringing the tom to the hen. While it is possible to get up at dark-thirty and slip in under his roost to be the hen at the base of his tree, in most cases when decoys are involved, hunters are placing decoys as a trap to attract the tom with their call and then lure him into range with a visible fake. In simple terms, despite reversing nature, it works, and decoys often play a key role.



MATERIALS AND WHATNOT

Turkey decoys are manufactured in materials including everything from hard plastics to faux-feathers, all aimed at fooling turkeys (and maybe buyers) into strutting their stuff into range. The truth is, the material, for the most part, isn't what makes decoy A more attractive to an excited tom than the material of decoy B. That isn't to say in very specific situations that a decoy covered in realistic imitation feathers won't outperform a plastic decoy, but 95% of the time, the material doesn't matter to an unsuspecting turkey —after all, their brain is the size of a walnut.



Where turkey decoy material does make a difference is during setup and transport. Hard plastic decoys are very loud and cumbersome to carry. Even when they are placed in a soft carry bag, when they bump into sticks or twigs or bang the decoy stake, it is like someone is beating a snare drum in the woods. In some cases, this might not matter, but if a hunter is trying to slip in under a roost or make a stealthy move through the woods, these sounds will put a turkey on high alert. On the other hand, soft plastic decoys are quieter to transport and setup, allowing the hunter to operate in stealth mode.



While soft decoys have advantages in the noise and transport department, they have their own downfalls. In most cases, soft plastic or foam decoys are designed to collapse as small as possible, allowing the hunter to carry potentially more decoys with less bulk. To achieve this, the decoys are made to be inflatable or flexible, requiring the hunter to inflate or shape them in the field. While this option is nice for those traveling long distances to hunt, it isn't without shortcomings. Inflatable decoys must be blown up to find their shape. In some cases, that isn't an issue, but often, it's a problem. I don't know about you, but after running a few hundred yards to cut off a turkey, the last thing I have is enough wind to inflate a decoy! In the case of non-inflatable soft plastic or foam decoys, getting them into shape, especially after being folded for a few days or weeks, can be a challenging task. While they can be generally coaxed into the form of a turkey, it takes some time and energy, and maybe a few curse words, to make it happen.

↑ A decoy can help wait-em-out hunters by focusing a turkey's attention.

TURKEY SHAPES

Likely more important than the material, the style/position of the decoy is what can make or break a turkey hunt. Turkey decoy setups can be broken down into three different categories: Aggressive/Breeding, Passive, and Content. While that

sounds like a straightforward approach, selecting the right decoy for each scenario is key.

Aggressive/Breeding: In situations where a hunter has been watching a boss strutting tom court his hens, placing out a full strut decoy in his strut zone is a great way to create visual draw while inciting an aggressive reaction. On some turkeys, this is about as effective as it gets, but on turkeys that have already had their



“...Passive decoying involves a much more subtle approach and is used to create visual attraction and put a face to the sound of a calling hen.”

butts kicked by another tom or aren't the dominant bird, it can shut them down or keep them just outside of range as they skirt around the decoy. So, don't be afraid to warn a buyer that a strutting decoy is not a one-size-fits-all solution, despite it being an effective way to attract a tom even if he is already with his group of hens. Simply put, a strutter is not something hunters should use every time they hunt.

Instead, a potentially more universally effective approach to attract both the dominant and subdominant toms is one of my personal

favorite tactics. Instead of a full-strut tom, hunters should place a lay-down hen underneath a half-strut jake decoy. Many manufacturers make this combination, including Avian-X and Dave Smith decoys, but it can also be achieved using any jake decoy and an upright hen that you simply place on the ground instead of on a stake. Using this sub-dominant jake decoy over top of a hen turkey in a breeding position will get the attention of most adult gobblers, as they think they are missing out on the, um, action.

Passive: Passive decoying involves a much more subtle approach and is used to create visual attraction and put a face to the sound of a calling hen. Decoys in this realm are not necessarily used to exploit the hot-headedness of a love-struck tom, but instead used to simply provide something visual to draw in a turkey. This works especially well in the woods or along a field when blind calling or after getting a response or cutting the distance. An upright hen works best in this situation, as they are more visible, even in tall grass,



and they replicate what a searching hen looks like when she is calling to her beaux.

Content: When a customer is hunting fall turkeys or spring turkeys that have been pressured or are near the end of the breeding cycle,

↑ A lay-down hen with a half-strut jake decoy can be a deadly combination on dominant and sub-dominant toms.

Turkeys coming to a call will be looking for the source of the call. If they don't see a decoy, they'll keep looking and are more likely to spot the hunter. This is one of a decoy's biggest advantages.



deploying a mixed decoy spread is a great way to create a content feel. Using this approach to decoying, hunters should deploy multiple decoys in mixed positions, and this should include jakes and hens. Virtually every decoy, except a full-strut decoy, can be used in this situation, and the number of decoys to use is only limited by what a hunter can carry. This also works well for evening hunts, even during the peak breeding cycle,

and especially near the suspected roost. Turkeys find safety in numbers, and by creating an imitation flock, hunters are exploiting their natural desire to be in a flock.

SITUATIONAL DECOY BASICS

Run-and-Gun: If you have been around turkey hunting, you have certainly heard the term “run-and-gun” as a tactic. The definition of run-and-gun is simple. After fly-



down, hunters blind call in hopes of eliciting a response gobble to help locate a tom. Once a tom sounds off, hunters attempt to get closer, often by running to cut him off or get to a location where they expect he may travel through or to. This style of hunting is effective, but hunters need to be forewarned that things can happen quickly. In this scenario, a single upright hen is the best decoy for hunters that employ this tactic. They are fast to set up and easy to deploy, and they're a great visual aid to distract the tom's attention away from the hunter. Having used this tactic many times, I've found that deploying a decoy is especially important on field edges and in open woods where a turkey could hang up if they don't see the hen that is calling to them.

Ambush: Despite the fact that many hunters claim they don't use this tactic, they either have or they do. Ambush hunting is setting up where the turkeys go to. This location can be a spot right off the roost, somewhere they feed, or simply a location they pass through. Depending on which location it is, all decoys can be used here. For instance, in an off-roost strut zone, the jake with laydown hen is effective. In travel or feeding areas, one active and one

feeder hen is a good choice. The real question is, how many decoys do hunters want to own? If the answer is as many as possible, they can keep a flock in their trunk. If the answer is “I want to own one or two,” an upright hen and jake will be suitable and efficient for most scenarios.

Wait-em-Out: This tactic is often used by hunters who simply want to sit in an area with turkeys, call regularly, and see what happens. This tactic is effective and is a situation where decoys must be used. In many cases, turkeys will come in silently or after only gobbling a few times. If the hunter has been there all morning and regularly calling, there is a good chance that a tom has heard the calls and may come check things out after he is done breeding his hens for the morning. Turkeys have an incredible ability to pinpoint the exact location where the call originates from, so never be surprised when they show up and are looking right at you, especially if there is no decoy out front.

In the end, selling turkey decoys is a matter of reading the customer and understanding what they want and need. Armed with some information on situational tactics and what makes decoys X different than Y, sellers can help seal the deal by being a turkey decoy expert. **HR**





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Preparing for the Next Downturn

Sales booms can't last forever. How do you prepare your business for the next slow cycle?

BY ACE LUCIANO

Pessimism is rather unbecoming. However, one cannot help but notice that the times are definitely changing. The price of everything is up. Interest rates are up. The difference in the monthly mortgage payment on the average size house today has increased by \$800-\$1,000 per month in just the last year. Inflation is rampant. You have probably seen your cost of goods increase exponentially, and especially so on things like firearms and ammunition.

Perhaps most importantly, as I write this, we are less than a month away from the midterm elections. Big changes are expected, which you'll know about by the time you're reading this.

Do you remember five or six years ago when there was a big slowdown in gun sales after the election? I recall you were able to buy a Smith & Wesson M&P Shield at full retail for \$189.99 after rebate. I bought five. I also remember the screams from the firearms industry for the industry organizations to "do something" to help with the slow sales.

The funny thing is, at least according to the NICS background check data, there wasn't as big of a slowdown as we all thought. It was much more an oversupply problem.

This time will be much different, and the responsibility to make it through lies not on your industry representatives, but solely on you. The question now is not if there will be a downturn, but, rather, when the downturn will occur.

There are many variables in this equation, but most experts agree that



it has already started and will likely occur sometime in the next 6 to 12 months.

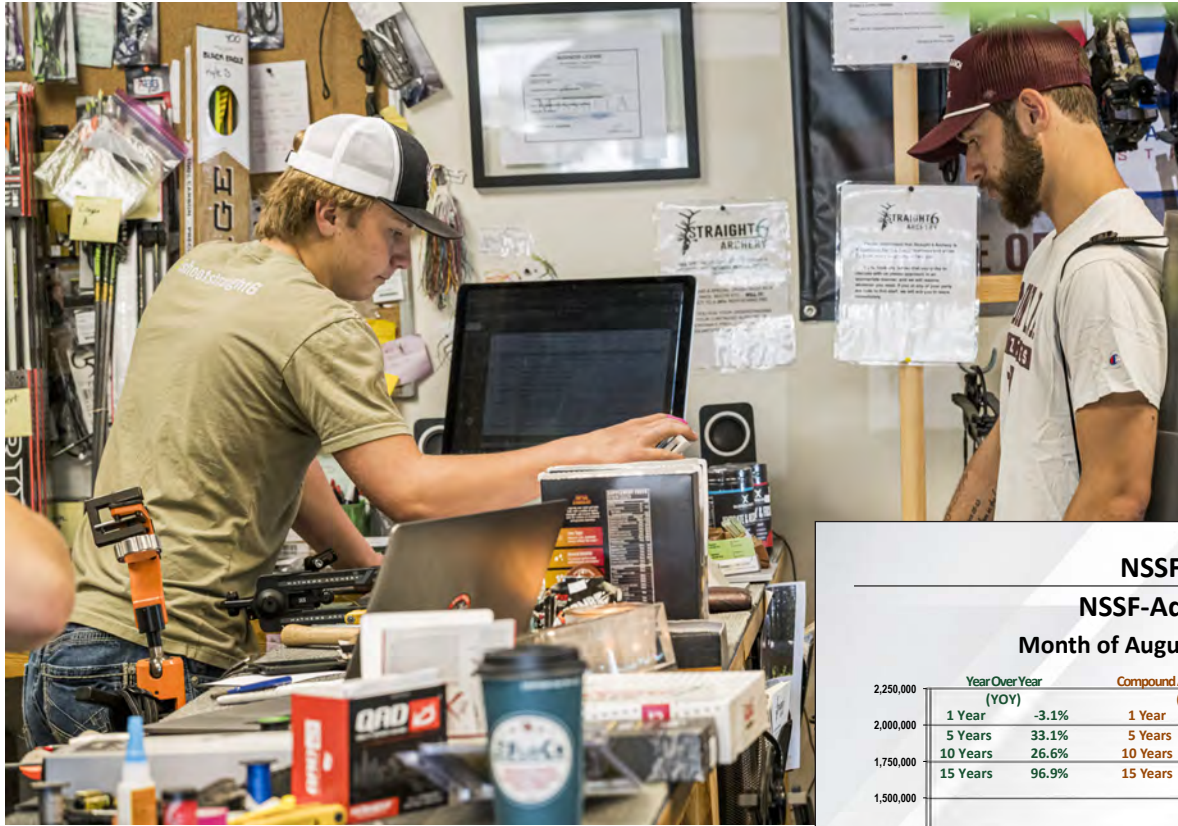
Regardless of when this downturn comes, you need to be prepared to not just weather the storm, but to hopefully thrive while others flounder. The following tips will help you do just that.

REVIEW YOUR MARKETING

This includes everything from your sponsorship of the local softball team to the ad you put on the local diner placemats to radio and television commercials and, of course, your social media ad campaigns. Determine which methods and means are giving you the greatest return on your

investment. Anything that is not making money should be reduced or canceled. Anything that is making money should be increased, and, if possible, substantially so. Think like the ants in the grasshopper and the ants story. They know that winter is coming, so they stock up on all the food they can before it comes.





← Sometimes gaining a new customer is worth breaking even or losing a little bit of money on a sale. Keep that in mind when you're creating your next clearance sale and in your marketing.

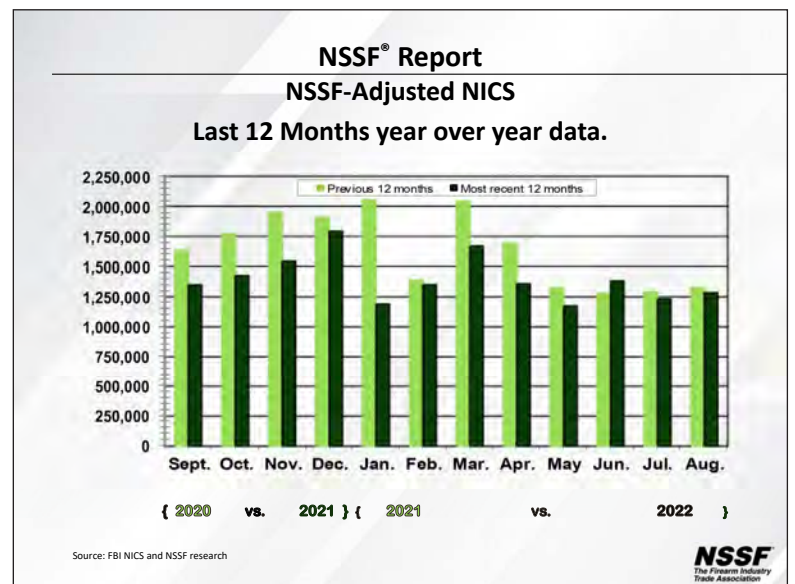
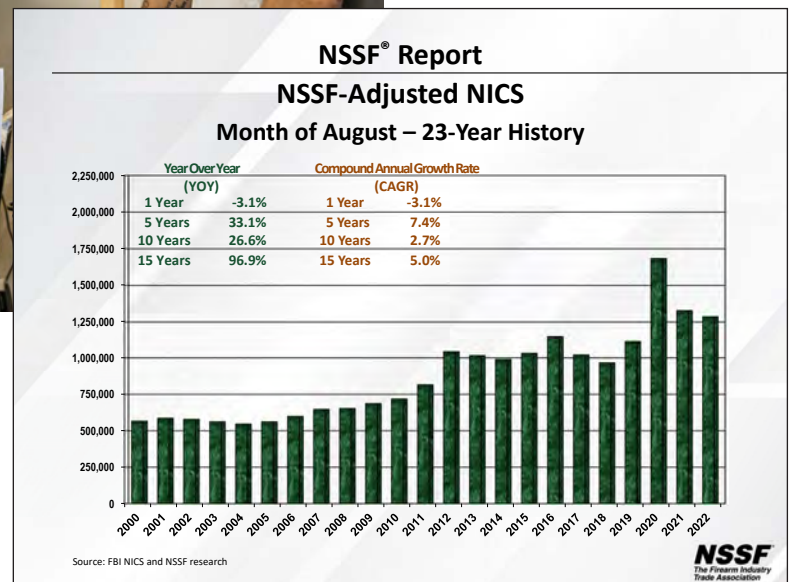
↓ We've been in an unprecedented sales boom for a while, but demand is finally starting to slow or at least level out.

Winter IS coming. Don't be like the grasshopper and think you can wait until it is here. Too many people wait until a softening of the economy occurs, and then cut their costs by cutting their marketing. This is a huge, huge mistake. As a matter of fact, there is no better time to make money and steal business from your competition than during a downturn in the marketplace. Why? Because most of your competitors are thinking just like I mentioned above — that their marketing is a “cost” that needs to be reduced to save money during the downturn. One of the most important lessons you can learn in business is that your marketing should never be a cost. Rather, it should be an investment that pays you returns and dividends. You should be ecstatic to dump as much money as possible into your marketing program(s) because, if done correctly, they should crank out multiples of that money spent. If they are not, you probably need a serious review and overhaul of your programs.

RAMP UP YOUR CONTENT PROGRAM

What's that? You don't have a content program? Then start one. Now. Add a blog to your website, or, if you don't have a website, start one with a blog. In the online world, content is king. The only way to compete is to have content. Good content will always outperform average content or bad content, but any content is better than none.

If you want to see some great examples of content done right, check out the blogs by Cheaper Than Dirt, AR15.com, guns.com, and Gunmade.com to start. Don't be overwhelmed and think you have to do what they are doing, but you should be putting up a good piece of content at a minimum of once or twice a week. Again, more is better. Starting now will put you well ahead for when difficult times come. The challenge to accomplishing this is that it is one of the easiest things to put off because it really isn't that difficult. Everyone thinks, “Oh, I'll just do my (insert any other necessary





business need here) right now and do my content later.”

Wrong. You might be able to do that a couple of times and get away with it, but sooner or later, there will be more urgent needs that come up and you’ll be so backed up it will become overwhelming. This is as important as any other part of your business. You put a sign on your door so that people know who and what you are. Today, your website and content strategy are just as important as the sign on your building. If you want to make it easy to remember and actually get your content up and out, put it on your calendar just like any other appointment, and make that time sacrosanct.

DEVELOP AN IRRESISTIBLE OFFER

The irresistible offer has saved many a business from failing. The key to an irresistible offer is that it should make you more than a little uncomfortable to offer it. Conversely, if you find it easy to make the offer, it is likely what is referred to as a “highly resistible” offer. These are offers like “10% off” or, worse, “25% off of MSRP” (Hint: Everyone knows that

↑ Make a shopper an offer they can’t refuse and they’ll buy. Don’t kid yourself, though —the offer must actually be a good deal.

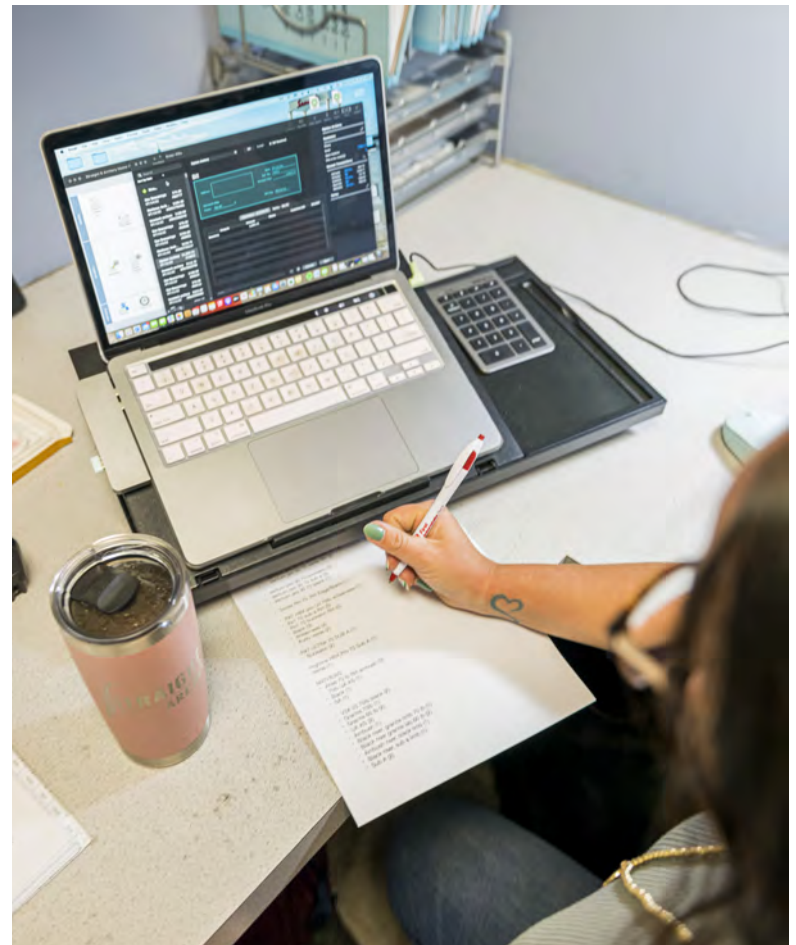
.....
 this is not really a deal.)

Remember what your goal is. Breaking even or even losing a small amount on the offer is fine as long as you are getting something of value from it — like a new customer. I have seen excellent irresistible offers that made very little money per sale but gained the business a great deal from people taking advantage of it. Sometimes that was adding to a contact or customer list, sometimes it was leading to additional sales of accessories or ancillary goods, and, other times, it was gaining customers that make regular purchases — the best kind you can hope for in your business.

GO THROUGH YOUR INVENTORY

It’s time to push out anything that has been sitting or lagging for very long. One of the worst times to be

.....
 → A downturn is the time to ramp up your digital content creation.



sitting on a pile of goods is when nobody wants to buy them. That time might be coming, and soon. Plan your future purchases for the next 12 to 18 months strategically. Focus on items that are popular and that sell during good and bad times. Now might not be the right time to add on that fancy whizbang widget with no history as a "trial run." It might be exactly the right time to stock up on ammo or other accessories and consumables that are more modest in cost.

Come up with a list of everything you sell or service you offer in your business that people buy regardless of their economic status. Ask for help from your customers here. Supermarkets run specials on liquor during lean times. People tend to not give up their alcohol, plus it brings them into the store. Everyone buys milk and eggs and butter, no matter how lean times are. Find YOUR milk, eggs and butter.

GROW YOUR CONTACT AND EMAIL LIST

If you don't have a customer relationship management software program and don't have a list of current and past customers, start one now. This is so important that you should drop what you are doing and find one immediately. There are plenty of free or very low cost options out there like HubSpot, Zoho, Insightly, Monday.com and others. Take some time, look through them, and pick one that you can start and grow with.

Next, do absolutely everything in your power to gain methods to contact your current, past and prospective customers in the most cost-effective way by contacting them directly through their email, a sales flyer delivered to their address, through their social media account, and, now more than ever, through their cell phone. Setting up your CRM and customer list the right



↑ There are a variety of programs to assist you in setting up an email list and marketing to your customers digitally. Take advantage!

.....
 way will pay huge dividends down the line in both good and bad markets. In a down market, it could be the difference between making it or breaking it.

Finally, you will likely do and feel better if you look at the coming downturn as an opportunity rather than a challenge. It's an opportunity to build your business, to win market share and customers, and to ultimately build a stronger and better business.

Remember, winter is coming. **HR**

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Selling to Snow GOOSE HUNTERS

Special spring conservation seasons for light geese give waterfowlers a chance to extend their fun. They need some specialized gear, though.

BY ALAN CLEMONS

Snow goose hunters are a special group within the waterfowl world. They're decked out in white, instead of camo, and are usually in a field instead of on water. They can use electronic calls and unplugged shotguns and often have hundreds or thousands of decoys. Snow goose hunters are next-level diehards who need tough, reliable gear.

Once traditional waterfowl season ends in January, most hunters put away their gear with a sigh of relief tinged with wistfulness. Others are champing at the bit to get going for the light goose season to open. That's technically what snow geese are called, along with blue and Ross' geese. Similar to Canada geese, the snow goose has a Greater and Lesser variety. Blue

and Ross' geese are considered cool bonus birds, far outnumbered by the snows. The special spring Light Goose Conservation Order has been in place since 1999. It was established as a way to try to reduce numbers of the migratory birds that annually decimate thousands of acres on Canada breeding grounds and along the Atlantic, Mississippi and Central flyways.

Light goose regulations are relaxed from those in traditional waterfowl seasons. They include:

- Allowance of unplugged shotguns
- Allowance of electronic calls
- Shooting time extended 30 minutes past sunset
- No bag limit
- Only a valid hunting license from any state; some states require a free permit for data





If you're in one of the major flyways, chances are good you're encountering duck hunters from late summer through January. Months before the season opens, many hunters with bucket-list trips on their minds are eyeing Canada and the Upper Midwest states' early opening days. A few might even have in mind Alaska for harlequins or the northeast coast in Maine, Massachusetts and New Hampshire for sea ducks. They're getting ready early, stocking up on ammo.

As the season rolls on in autumn and early winter, snow goose hunters are getting their gear and plans ready for spring. They, too, may have bucket-list trips on the calendar: Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Kansas, Maryland. They'll be scoping out electronic calls, stocking up on ammo — lots of it — and making sure their gear will be ready for a workout. Remember, unplugged guns mean a lot of shooting.

Not every waterfowler will chase snows. It takes a special desire to get up earlier than normal and put out 1,000 or more rags, decoys, shells and an electronic flyer or two, and then make sure everyone is positioned correctly and properly camouflaged (in white, remember) and

is aware of the safety routines and shooting lanes. And then you call in — if they cooperate — flocks of wary, eagle-eyed snow geese. Many hunters will book trips with guides, not unlike regular waterfowling, and help out with some of that process — because that's usually part of the hunt — while not having to buy everything.

Still, anyone hunting snow geese in spring will need gear. Here's what you can sell them.

“As the season rolls on in autumn and early winter, snow goose hunters are getting their gear and plans ready for spring.”

BOOTS, APPAREL

Last spring I hunted for a couple of days in central Arkansas with Kendall and Keaton Kelso, who own KK Outfitters in southeast Kansas. Natives of Iowa, they grew up outdoors hunting and fishing everything from small game and deer to waterfowl.



↑ Hard-core snow goose hunters will modify their guns with an extended magazine tube, so consider stocking some for the most popular shotguns you sell.

When the light goose conservation seasons were established in 1999, they began pursuing snow geese harder along the Mississippi Flyway.

At our goose camp, we were outfitted in white pull-over pants and zip-up tops, along with a white toque. It wasn't cold enough for us to worry about bulking up, which was nice. All we had to do was chill out on our reclining chairs when the geese were circling and not flash our moonbeam faces at the birds.





← With no bag limits, snow goose hunters will burn through ammo. Stock up on 3½- and 3-inch shells ahead of the conservation season.

↓ All that ammo and other gear is a lot to haul into the field. Well-built blind bags should sell well to goose hunters.

Our boots were dark, which wasn't a worry because they blended with the unplowed field the geese wanted to land in near the decoys.

Solid white from head to toe isn't required. Your customers don't need to look like the Michelin Man or Mr. Stay-Puft, but they will need white pants and tops, or a white jumpsuit, and maybe a white cap or beanie. Gloves, maybe. We had some inexpensive, gray fingerless gloves that worked well.

We weren't sweating, but we weren't cold, either, which is how spring hunting goes. February and March can be weird, though. Insulated and uninsulated knee boots are great for mucky agriculture fields and the occasional ditch to cross. Be sure to ask customers if they have or need boots, along with socks for warm to cold conditions. I donned some thin Swiftwick wool socks in my Dry-Shod boots and was fit as a fiddle.

AMMUNITION

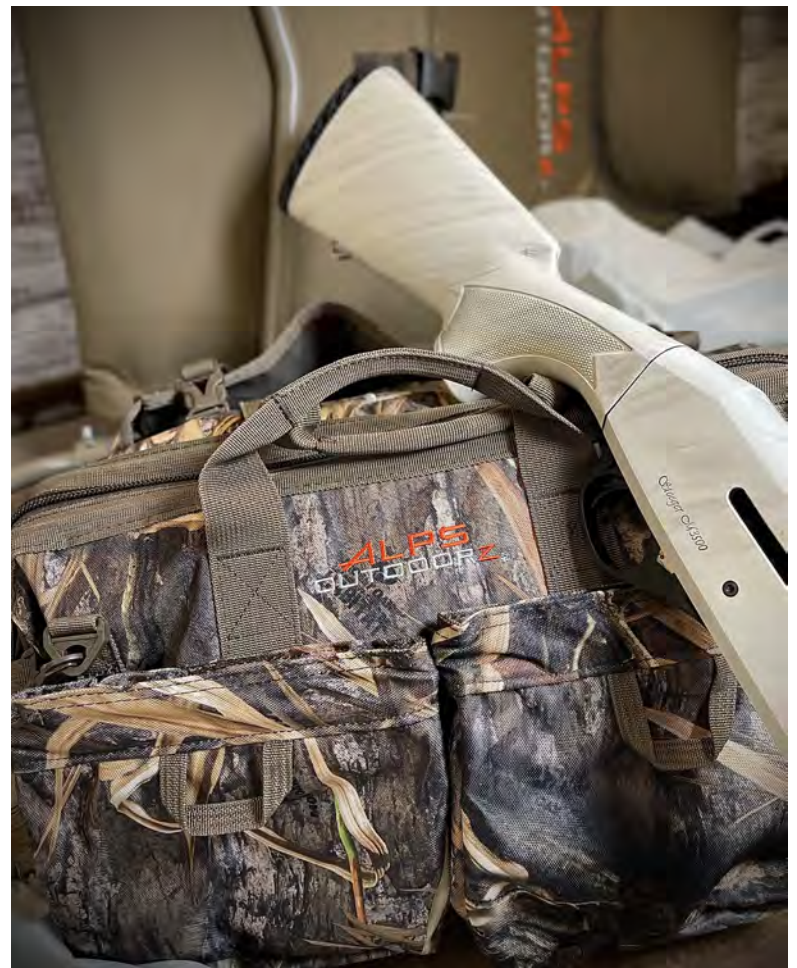
Loading 10 rounds of 3- and 3½-inch magnum goose-blasters into a shotgun magazine was a different experience. In 45 years of chasing waterfowl, I'd never put in more than three. We ran the mags dry a couple

of times, and then sat amazed that six of us had fired almost 60 rounds in one volley. And then we reloaded in case any birds wheeled back over.

With the allowance of unplugged guns, this may be your biggest selling point to spring snow goose hunters. They will shoot a lot if the birds are there and come into the decoys. They will shoot more than they expect or probably ever have. If they run out of ammo, it won't be fun trying to find more, especially if they're in a rural area and have to visit one or more "marts" looking for anything.

Consider adding an extra case or three of 3½- and 3-inch shells to your shelves for spring. Better yet, create a snow goose display with all the goods: shells, white apparel, boots. Ammo will be a hot seller for goose hunters, whether they're going after them in spring or they want to stock up for the next season.

And speaking of unplugged shotguns, since most factory shotguns only hold five shells, many snowgoose hunters will want to add an extended magazine tube to their gun. Stocking some aftermarket options for the most popular shotgun models might be a smart bet.





CALLS, BAGS

Electronic callers are legal for the spring season, which opens the door for sales that also could reach into other seasons for predators. Don't overlook these great possibilities when you can offer and suggest products for multi-season hunting.

The Snow Pro caller from Fox-Pro, for example, has 37 snow goose sounds, 29 predator sounds, and nine crow calls. It's available in white, which helps it hide, and it cranks up the volume on quiet mornings when hunters need to get the attention of geese, predators or crows. Winter and spring are great times for all three hunting situations. The Snow Pro handles up to 300 sounds, has long cords to its 10-watt speakers so hunters can move them around in decoy spreads, works with a remote control and is built for the worst weather conditions.

Another great seller, which crosses multiple seasons, is an accessory bag. Hunters take so much stuff into the field. Calls, snacks, containers of coffee or soup for cold days, extra ammunition, repair kits for waders or guns — the list can be long. Some hunters are minimalists and take little, while others prepare like they're going to invade a small country. Good, tough and reliable game bags can help either kind of hunter.

Backpacks are a good sales option. Many today are designed with waterproof or weather-proof materi-

als, durable zippers and ample room with myriad pockets. Open space in the backpack holds ammo boxes, a Thermos, clothes and other gear. They're easy to shoulder and cover multiple seasons. The backpack doesn't have to be white, either, for snow goose hunters. A camo backpack or bag will blend in just fine.

Blind bags offer an added benefit thanks to their design. Many today are built like tool bags you see in big-box stores: hearty, wide zippers easy to grasp in cold temps or with gloves, a wide-mouth opening to see and retrieve or store miscellaneous items, and multiple pockets inside and out to put more gear. Hunting blind bags today also typically have waterproof, molded rubber bottoms that keep out moisture and mud. Simply spray off and be done.

These backpacks or bags can be used, too, in other seasons. I have both, and they're set up for deer and waterfowl. With just a few additions and takeaways, I could have either of them ready for a trip for turkeys, upland birds or small game. The blind bag works for fishing, too. Multi-purpose gear always is a great selling point.

Don't overlook the chance to sell to hunters during snow goose season. Whether they're diehards with a trailer full of rags and decoys or travelers going with guides, they will need some gear you can sell. Stock a few well-planned items, have an eye-catching display and be ready. **HR**

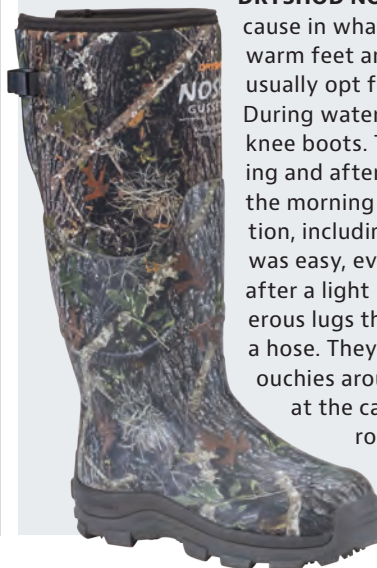
FIELD-TESTED GEAR FOR SNOW GOOSE HUNTERS

ALPS OUTDOORZ SNOW GOOSE CHAIR: We used these snooze-inducing layout chairs in Arkansas for a couple of days, and everyone in our crew gave it the double thumbs-up. The chair unfolds from just 7 inches (great for storage and travel) to a comfortable position that keeps you low to and off the ground. It's almost 6 feet long when unfolded. Backpack straps allow for easy transport, and the padded headrest is, well, quite nice when the geese aren't flying. Shooting is a breeze from the chair, either lying on it or sitting up. Side pockets hold gear or ammo. www.alpsoutdoorz.com

STOEGER M3500 SNOW GOOSE: This gun's trim lines and easy shouldering had us geeked to get a few geese within range. When we did, we were giddy with the results. The Stoeger M3500 Snow Goose 12-gauge is dressed in Distressed White Cerakote, blending nicely with the decoy spread, and comes with a 28-inch barrel. The 10-round extended magazine is almost as long. We filled it with 3- and 3½-inch loads, anxious to check the recoil. No problem, even with the 3½-inch slammers. The M3500's inertia-driven action smoothly cycles everything from 2¼- to 3½-inch ammo in all conditions. It comes with oversized controls for easy use with gloves, five choke tubes and a para-cord sling. www.stoegerindustries.com

ALPS OUTDOORZ PIT BLIND BAG: Voted the Best Multi-Purpose Bag for 2022 by Field & Stream, the Pit Blind bag is outstanding for its simplicity. It is big, at 18 x 9.75 x 11, with a gaping "pop open" mouth to get into the main compartment that has a removable divider. Two hold-open exterior pockets can hold shell boxes and have drain ports. It has an extra-large exterior Thermos pocket that can double to hold gear, a carry handle and removable padded shoulder strap. The molded bottom sheds mud, water, ice and muck. In Arkansas, I carried six boxes of ammo, coffee, gloves, toque, sunglasses, ear muffs and batteries and still had room for more. www.alpsoutdoorz.com

DRYSHOD NOSHO — I'm a bit of a shoe nerd, because in whatever hunting situation, I want dry, warm feet and comfortable boots. For walking, I'll usually opt for 8-inch lace-ups for ankle support. During waterfowl (and deer) seasons, it's rubber knee boots. The DryShod Nosho hit all marks during and after my Arkansas hunt. They were warm in the morning chill thanks to seven layers of insulation, including a breathable liner. Walking around was easy, even in some near-slick ag field rows after a light rain, thanks to the good grip from generous lugs that shed mud easily with the spray of a hose. They were comfortable, as well, with no ouchies around my toes and an expandable gusset at the calf. For us big ol' boys who need more room, that's a plus. Definitely consider adding these to your boot lineup this year. www.dryshodusa.com



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SHOT Show Is Almost Here!

SHOT Show 2023 is upon us. Here are some tips for attendees.

BY NSSF STAFF

After a canceled show in 2021 due to COVID-19, SHOT Show made a big comeback in 2022, and the 2023 show is poised to be better than ever. The sheer size and scope of the show can be overwhelming, even for seasoned attendees. Here are a few tips and head's ups that will help you make the most of your experience this year.

BADGE PICKUP DETAILS

To avoid the anxiety of receiving badges in time, we will not be mailing badges to exhibitors. Instead, we are providing numerous places around Las Vegas, as early as the Wednesday before the show, to pick up your badges. Locations will not only include the Venetian Expo and

Caesars Forum, but also six hotels along The Strip as well as at the airport. Continue to check shotshow.org/badge-pickup-locations/ for a full list of locations and times. If you have any questions regarding the registration process, please don't hesitate to call us at 855-355-7468 or 203-270-2370, or email exhibitorhelp@shotshow.org.

PRE-SHOW GOLF EVENT TO BENEFIT HONORED AMERICAN VETERANS AFIELD

Join more than 100 industry leaders for the NSSF/Honored American Veterans Afield (HAVA) Golf Classic. The pre-SHOT Show golf event will take place January 15 at Bear's Best Las Vegas. This event sold out early, but it should be a fun-filled

day of golf and camaraderie that promises to raise more than \$50,000 for our industry's veteran's charity.

WHAT IS THE SHOT BRIDGE?

We're making it easy to travel between your favorite exhibits in The Venetian Expo and Caesars Forum with the SHOT Bridge, presented by RIA-USA. Save time walking from one exhibit hall to another. The SHOT Bridge can be accessed from the exhibit floor on The Venetian Expo Level 1 or Level 2 and connects directly to the Caesars Forum exhibit halls.

YOU'RE INVITED! ALL STAR JAM CONCERT

Join us after the show on Wednesday, January 18, outside Caesars Forum next to the Great Outdoors Plaza for a concert featuring Lynyrd Skynyrd's Johnny Van Zant, Montgomery Gentry's Eddie Montgomery, and a special surprise guest. Concert will be free to all 2023 SHOT Show badge holders.

FIND 400+ NEW PRODUCTS

Technology drives sales, and the 2023 SHOT Show's New Product Center, protected by USCCA, showcases the latest innovations and the smartest products at your fingertips. The New Product Center returns to The Venetian Expo and will feature more than 400 new products.



SHARPEN YOUR MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Want to attract new shooters, manage inventory and volume, and build traffic through the slower seasons? SHOT University™ session content will cover customer communications, used firearms, new shooters, ATF/NICS, compliance, operations, marketing, workforce development and more. A la carte courses are available Tuesday, January 17-Thursday, January 19. See all the details at shotshow.org/shot-university/.

LEEP SPECIALIZES IN LEOS

The Law Enforcement Education Program, in partnership with Law Enforcement Technology Magazine, provides valuable insights for real-world, on-scene applications of various technology and training methods. 2023 session content includes shooting range maintenance, wound simulation, use of force,

close-quarter combat, live-fire training program overviews, low-visibility situational preparedness, and much more. View course descriptions at shotshow.org/leep/.

GOOD FOOD AND GREAT CONVERSATIONS

The 2023 SHOT Show will host two outdoor BBQ areas where you can grab lunch while meeting with other industry professionals and touch base with team members. One outdoor BBQ, sponsored by Daniel Defense, can be found on Venetian Level 2 by the SHOT Bridge, and a second outdoor BBQ can be enjoyed at Caesars Forum just off the Great Outdoors Plaza.

UPDATE YOUR DIGITAL PRESS KIT

Exhibitors should be sure to take advantage of your Digital Press Kit and show off your products to SHOT Show media. The Digital Press Kit

"NSSF leads the way in supporting industry businesses."

platform is free and easy to use. Just click on Digital Press Kit Access under the Dashboard links on your Exhibitor Dashboard. This instructional video and how-to instructions help walk you through uploading your media assets, including press releases, logos, photographs, and videos, along with your company's profile and media contacts. Digital Press Kits reach more than 2,000 credentialed journalists attending the show, and they access the site all year long looking for products to do stories on.

FIND BIG DEALS WITH SHOT EXHIBITORS

Big deals await on the 2023 SHOT Show exhibit floor, but you can begin previewing exhibitors and their product details in the online show planner. View company descriptions, schedule meetings and find contact information.

NSSF: LEARN FROM THE PROS

NSSF® leads the way in supporting industry businesses. At the 2023 SHOT Show, you can meet with NSSF staff and learn how to strengthen your business. Industry experts will be on-site at the NSSF booths at both The Venetian Expo and Caesars Forum to help members develop new strategies and share insights for common roadblocks you might be facing. Interested in becoming a member? Visit www.nssf.org/membership. HR

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HUNTING RETAILER GEAR ROUNDUP FABULOUS FOOD PLOTS

The more thought and elbow grease land managers/hunters put into developing and nurturing food plots, the greater the likelihood for success during the hunting season — and that means choosing the best products for the job.

BY GORDY KRAHN

Feed them and they will come. Give them everything they want and need, and they will stay. Food plots provide the “deer candy” that reinforces the premise that this is a great place to hang out — that it provides those essentials for a good life. On the micro level, placement of food plots determines the best locations for treestands and ground blinds to ensure landowners/hunters get the greatest return for their efforts come hunting season. Those who want to maximize the drawing power of their food plots put considerable thought into the seeds they sow and how they care for the resulting plants. The goal, of course, is a healthier deer herd and increased hunting opportunities. Fortunately, there is a wide assortment of food plot seeds available as well as implements to help with the heavy lifting — tractors, seeders, mowers, etc. — available to fit any food plot project, big or small. As a hunting retailer, you can provide the tools necessary for building and maintaining epic food plots — by providing those tools needed to succeed. With that in mind, here are some top-shelf land/deer management products that will get your food plot patrons off on the right foot.



ANTLER KING TROPHY CLOVER MIX

Antler King's Trophy Clover Mix (\$34.99-\$299.99) is a high-protein, tonnage-producing perennial blend for reliable deer and turkey food plots that last up to six years. Treated with Ultra Coat Orange for higher germination rates and increased forage yield, Trophy Clover Mix can grow 2 to 3 feet tall with up to 10 tons of 30 percent protein forage per acre to promote a healthy deer herd and grow trophy bucks. Four clover varieties, chicory and rapeseed provide a hardy food source that's nutritious, palatable and digestible throughout spring, summer and fall. Trophy Clover Mix can be planted in the spring or fall and is available in 3.5- 24- and 40-pound bags.

www.antlerking.com

BIOLOGIC NON-TYPICAL CLOVER

Non-Typical Clover — available only from Mossy Oak BioLogic — is a fast establishing and aggressive large leaf white clover that features superior cold tolerance and proven palatability (\$22.99/2 pounds; \$69.99/8 pounds; \$345.99/40 pounds). This clover planting has been extensively tested and chosen for its durability, nutrition and attraction — browse tolerant with a three- to five-year lifespan with proper management including mowing, fertilization according to soil testing and weed control with herbicides. Recent field trials have shown that Non-Typical Clover has a track record of quick stand establishment, aggressive stolon (stem) growth, heavy forage output and long-term stand persistence. It will grow in all soil types with adequate soil moisture.

www.plantbiologic.com



ANI-LOGICS CRUSH FORAGE COLLARDS

Forage trials at hunting personalities Lee and Tiffany Lakosky's personal farm led to the creation of this unique variety of forage collards, ideal for developing attractive late-season food plots. The cold temperature tolerance and low growth point of Ani-Logics Crush Forage Collards (\$14.99/1 pound) make it a great food plot seed for late-season attraction — the resulting plants able to withstand heavy grazing pressure and still yield amazing top growth. This variety of forage collards is easily established, and its exceptionally high protein content offers great attraction and palatability, making this an irresistible sweet treat for whitetails. Plant in the fall when the forecast calls for rain within 10 days for best results. Plants 1/6 acre or 7,500 sq. ft.

www.anilogics.com





BOSS BUCK FINAL DESTINATION

New for 2022, Boss Buck Final Destination is a professionally selected blend of sugar beets and turnips that attracts deer and provides them with essential nutrients and energy and keeps them coming back for more (\$34.95/4-pound bag). The 4-pound bag covers .5 acres (22,000 square feet) and lasts all winter long, which makes it a great choice for late-season hunting. Made in the USA, Boss Buck Final Destination is formulated to keep deer browsing longer. Boss Buck carries a full line of food and mineral attractants.

www.bossbuck.com



EVOLVED CLOVER PRO

Clover Pro from Evolved (\$32.99/4-pound bag) is a special mix of perennial clovers that can be planted in spring or fall and adapts to most regions and climates. Forage clovers attract deer, and the nutritious taste keeps them there. These clovers also grow bigger and stronger thanks to ProGro Biostimulant, a proprietary seed coating that yields more forage per acre for a healthier herd. The 4-pound bag covers .5 acres (50 x 50 yards) and is a blend of perennial white and red clovers. Planting depth is .25 inches.

www.evolved.com



LUCKY BUCK PERFECT PERENNIAL

Perfect Perennial is a food plot blend from Lucky Buck (\$39.95/4 pounds) that is made of the highest quality forages that are highly digestible, have season-long palatability and high protein — crucial for attracting deer and maximum herd health and optimum antler development. The mix of clovers, alfalfa and chicory was selected for its high sugar and low fiber content and maturity time. Four pounds will cover a half-acre plot and should last four to six years between seedings. For best results, sow in early spring or late summer.

www.lucky-buck.com

WHITETAIL INSTITUTE IMPERIAL WHITETAIL CLOVER

Imperial Whitetail Clover from Whitetail Institute (\$42.98/4 pounds; \$149.98/18 pounds; \$246.98/36 pounds) contains the only clover genetically designed for whitetail deer. It has an extremely high protein content — critical for antler, muscle and bone growth and thrives in extreme cold as well as warm, dry climates. It also helps deer deliver heavier, healthier fawns and produce more milk. The Whitetail Institute R&D team has continually improved Imperial Whitetail Clover over the years with new and improved clover varieties. Deer love the taste and will travel long distances to feed on it. This perennial is heat-, drought- and disease-resistant and coated with RainBond for enhanced seedling survivability. It lasts up to five years from a single planting.

www.whitetailinstitute.com



PLOT DR. LIQUID LIME

For those landowners/deer managers who are sick of hauling and spreading bags of pelletized lime to boost food plot production and need rapid pH adjustment, Plot Dr. Liquid Lime (\$50/Gallon) is the right tool for the job. Adjusting the pH balance in soil in a matter of days, it lasts all season long. This soil applied calcium product provides fertility, rapid pH adjustment and soil structure improvement, and with its microscopic size and high percentage of pure calcium, Plot Dr. Liquid Lime helps grow better food plots, offers users savings in time and labor and provides almost instant gratification. One to 3 gallons of Liquid Lime per acre will take care of the worst pH adjustment needs.

www.tipinc.net/plotdr



BY GORDY KRAHN

HUNTING RETAILER NEW PRODUCTS



THERMASEAT TWO MAN TREESTAND REPLACEMENT SEAT
ThermaSeat's Two Man Treestand Replacement Seat now features a folded design to make carrying and installing it even easier. Available in two thicknesses, these stealthy seats feature Silentouch fabric finished in Mossy Oak or Realtree camo. They're constructed of Softek closed-cell foam to repel water and provide freeze-proof protection in any conditions. The ThermaSeat Two Man Treestand Replacement Seat features quick-release straps for a secure fit and is compatible with most two-man ladder stands and lock-ons. MSRP: \$29.25/.75-inch seat; \$45.90/1.5-inch seat www.thermaseat.com

FULL RANGE EURO SKULL HANGING SYSTEM

The pioneers of the 180-degree pivoting trophy display, Full Range Hanging Systems is now offering its high-quality mounting systems in a model engineered specifically for European skull mounts. Constructed of strong, durable steel, the Skull System features four points of contact to the skull for the most secure attachment when displaying treasured trophies. It offers a wide range of motion to achieve the perfect angle for showcasing skull mounts in any space. The easy-to-use Skull System comes with everything needed to install mounts in any room of the house. No man cave or trophy room is complete without a display system from Full Range. MSRP: \$65 www.fullrangesystems.com



PLANO RUSTRICTOR AW2 52-INCH GUN CASE

AW2 rifle/shotgun series cases are the first in the Plano line to feature Rustrictor technology. They're still impenetrable from the outside, with dual-stage lockable latches and a Dri-Loc seal that create a watertight, dust-proof shield. Inside, not only does a release valve equalize pressure through temperature or altitude changes, but there's also the added benefit of Rustrictor to prevent rust and corrosion. The Rustrictor AW2 52-inch Rifle/Shotgun case is Plano's largest All Weather rifle case, and the only wheeled model in the series — oversized to store and protect multiple rifles, shotguns or ARs in the most extreme conditions. MSRP: \$249.99 www.planomolding.com

CHARD #12 ELECTRIC MEAT GRINDER

With countless ways to use ground meat, choosing the right meat grinder for the job is a must — one that can make brats, sausages, burgers and more. The Chard #12 Heavy Duty Electric Grinder grinds or stuffs generous portions of meat into sausage casings in a short amount of time via its 500-watt motor — up to 6 pounds of meat per minute. Safety is also a consideration. The #12 Heavy Duty Electric Grinder has a thermal safety reset button that provides overload protection and extends the life of the grinder. It also features a large hopper and food pusher with storage compartment and fine, medium and course steel grinding plates and stainless-steel cutting blade. MSRP: \$194.99 www.chardproducts.com



SAUER SL5 WATERFOWL SHOTGUN

J.P. Sauer & Sohn's SL5 Waterfowl shotguns feature a slick 12-gauge Fred Bear Old School model with a camo stock and forearm and a brown Cerakote barrel and action, and can accommodate 2.75-, 3- or 3.5-inch shotshells. Inertia-driven, it requires fewer parts than a gas-driven gun and minimal cleaning. It has an oversized extended bolt handle and release button and is available in three chrome-lined barrel lengths — 26, 28 and 30 inches. The receiver is made with a steel upper and aluminum lower for strength and improved balance. The L5 Waterfowl comes with sling attachments, recoil pad, red single-bead LPA front fiber-optic sight and five extended choke tubes. Other models include Black Synthetic and Fred Bear Old School Camo (no brown Cerakote). MSRP: \$1,579-\$1,779 www.blaser-group.com





VAPOR TRAIL INTEGRATE 8 ARROW REST

Vapor Trail's Limb Driver Gen Integrate 8 (GI8) arrow rest was specifically designed for the Integrate mounting system found on most of today's major bow brands. This system not only alleviates past fitment issues, but the rest is one of the company's lightest, most compact arrow rest to date. The GI8 was designed with advanced features including adjustable windage and elevation and a full capture rubber over-molded carbon cage made with proprietary vibration-dampening material and is available in 14 interchangeable colors. The free-floating launcher arm supports the arrow for up to 70 percent of the shot cycle, resulting in increased downrange accuracy. The GI8 comes packaged with Vapor Trail's own SHAG (Shelf Hushing Arrow Grabbing) pad and activation cord. MSRP: \$199.99 www.vaportrailarchery.com



SAVAGE ARMS A22 TAKEDOWN RIMFIRE RIFLE

Hunting, camping, hitting the range and more just got even better with the Savage Arms A22 Takedown rimfire rifle. Opening/connecting with just a one-quarter twist and offering an extremely simple breakdown, this latest member of the A Series family of Savage rifles is an excellent choice as a backpack gun for tough hunts and backcountry hikes. Key features include a synthetic stock with a storage compartment in the pistol grip and magazine compartment in the cheek riser, 18-inch carbon steel matte black barrel, low-profile sights, 0 MOA Picatinny rail with an iron sight channel through the rail, tang safety, 10-round rotary magazine and user-adjustable AccuTrigger (3 to 5 pounds). MSRP: \$479 www.savagearms.com



THAW RECHARGEABLE HANDWARMERS

One of the most frequent complaints about chemical disposable handwarmers is the inability to limit and restart the reaction to conserve the heat. Even more so, once they have been used, they are considered trash. Thaw has set out to solve both problems with its large and small personal USG-C rechargeable handwarmers with double-sided heating. These small and large handwarmers have three different power settings and come standard with memory recall, which returns the unit to its previous heat setting. The small handwarmer can heat up to 10 hours on low at 46C/114F, while the large handwarmer can heat up to 17 hours on low at 46C/114F. MSRP: \$29.99/Small; \$39.99/Large www.thaw.acbrands.com

WOOX SOLO BACKCOUNTRY AXE

The Woox Solo axe is a great choice for hunters who want an elegant multi-purpose implement that can withstand the rigors of backcountry ventures. Its 8.5-inch-wide tempered carbon steel slip-fit head has two cutting edges, the primary edge measuring 3.5 inches. The opposing side of the head is an adze, proficient in fine point-work and digging tasks. The 19-inch handle, made from Appalachian hickory, is available in brown or black, each with detailed checkering for a superior grip. The Solo weighs 1.85 pounds and every axe includes a genuine Italian leather sheath. MSRP: \$149 www.woox.com



MAVEN CRF.1 COMPACT RANGEFINDER

The Maven CRF.1 Compact rangefinder features a quick access menu for easy, intuitive use and an auto black/red display to ensure visible readouts in myriad environmental conditions. With a 6X zoom, 22mm objective lens, a ranging distance of 5 yards to 2,400 yards and line-of-sight/angle compensation, it is a great choice for both archery and rifle enthusiasts. The CRF.1's Field/Forest function allows users to select a range mode based on the environment to ensure the most accurate reading possible. It's also tripod mountable and covered by Maven's unconditional lifetime warranty, and it comes with a wrist strap, preinstalled CR2 battery and a double-layered microfiber storage bag. MSRP: \$295 www.mavenbuilt.com



GOLD TIP SUPERFLY PRO CROSSBOW BOLT

Made with high modulus carbon for a super-stiff spine, the Superfly Pro crossbow bolt from Gold Tip was designed to deliver long-range accuracy and transfer maximum energy generated by today's high-performance crossbows shooting 350+ fps. It features a straightness tolerance of +/- .001-inch and a weight tolerance of +/- .5 grains. Designed using Smart Carbon technology — carbon with no fillers — the Superfly Pro delivers durability and reliable straightness retention and is available in 20- and 22-inch lengths. It weighs 436 (20-inch) and 458 grains (22-inch) when used with a 100-grain field point. MSRP: \$69.99/20-inch/Six pack; \$89.99/22-inch/Six pack www.goldtip.com



Hunting Fair Chase

Everyone has a different definition of what's "fair" in hunting, especially as it regards new technology. Where do we draw the line?

BY BOB ROBB

For those of us who've been in the hunting business for decades, the concept of fair chase hunting comes as naturally as breathing. We were taught early on that you do not take unfair advantage of game, that it is all about the process, there is no such thing as instant success, and you have to pay your dues to become a woodsman — which translates into increasing the odds.

Occasionally I receive email solicitations like this, and it makes me wonder about fair chase hunting. What does that mean, exactly? Who defines it? Is it the same for everybody? Why is it important?

One such email read, in part: "Friends, we have two monster Desert Bighorn sheep over 190 inches inside the fence available to be hunted during the 2018-2019 upcoming season. These two sheep have been already measured and expect to go 195+ for the next season. We also have a good variety of sheep of different sizes ranging from 160 up to 185 inches at different price ranges. Lodging, first-class cuisine, 5-star service, two-day hunt. Please contact me if you have any interest in any of these sheep."

This is hunting? Shooting one of these magnificent rams inside a high fence under these conditions does not resemble fair-chase hunting, at least in my mind. It's collecting, nothing more. One of the key tenets of fair-chase hunting is there is no guaranteed outcome. As the saying goes, you pay your money, you take your chances; success is never ensured. Now, if that's what someone wants to do, I truly don't have a problem with that. But please, don't

call it fair-chase "hunting."

The whole topic of hunting inside a high fence is a bit complicated. In much of the world, it's an accepted practice. Here in the U.S., high-fence hunting occurs to a smaller degree. In Texas, for example, there are lots of high-fence ranches that offer whitetails as well as exotic animals imported from around the world. Some other states have high-fence ranches specializing in monster whitetail bucks, with pricing determined by the size of the antlers. You can also find ranches that offer big bull elk, bighorn sheep and other animals. It's a highly-controversial industry, to say the least.

If you've never been exposed to it, at first blush you might think it means caging an animal inside a relatively small enclosure. That's not necessarily true. In South Africa, for example, I bowhunted plains game and Cape buffalo one week on a fenced ranch that encompassed almost 30,000 acres — that's nearly 47 square miles — much of it rugged, mountainous terrain where hunting was difficult, to say the least. I didn't find getting a shot at an animal like shooting a duck in a barrel at all. And success was not guaranteed by the outfitter. Fencing large properties here is common, for many reasons, like keeping both predators and poachers out.

Today the concept of fair chase

is being questioned in terms of new introductions in technology. A few states have banned scouting cameras during all or parts of the calendar year, for example. Questions are being asked about high-tech crossbows being allowed during archery-only seasons and whether or not that violates the spirit of what bowhunting is all about. Do e-bikes running up and down roads closed to vehicular traffic give those riders an unfair advantage?

The Pope & Young Club's website states that "The fair chase concept does, however, extend beyond the hunt itself; it is an attitude and a way of life based in a deep-seated respect for wildlife, for the environment, and for other individuals who share the bounty of this vast continent's natural resources." That's well stated. The Boone & Crockett Club has some great thoughts on the topic; you can find them at www.huntfairchase.com.

In early America, how we hunted didn't matter; game was plentiful and hunting was not for sport, but survival and profit. But by the late 1800s, unregulated sport and commercial market hunting had taken its toll, and wildlife was no longer abundant. Enter Theodore Roosevelt, who formed a group of his friends into the Boone and Crockett Club in 1887 to address this rapid decline. Their solution? Promote a

new system of natural resource use called "conservation," and promote regulated hunting as the foundation for this new system. Soon they began promoting another then-radical concept: fair chase.

If hunting was going to be allowed to continue, how it was being conducted and the character of the hunter now mattered. Fair chase became a part of an overall conservation ethic, defining a true sportsman as one who could kill game, yet use self-restraint and stand guard to ensure that wildlife populations would never be threatened again. It didn't mean hunting was a sport like other contests, but rather its participants used a "sporting" approach. Fair chase defined the rules, elevating sportsmen to highly respected members of the community for their skill as woodsman and providers, but also for their commitment to something greater than themselves.

Today, more than ever before, the concept of fair-chase hunting is bedrock to our industry's survival and our way of life. So, to answer the Mexican outfitter's email: Count me out. Way out.

What's your take on fair-chase hunting? How do your customers view it? Drop me a note at editor@grandviewoutdoors.com and let me know. **HR**

PRO STAFF

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



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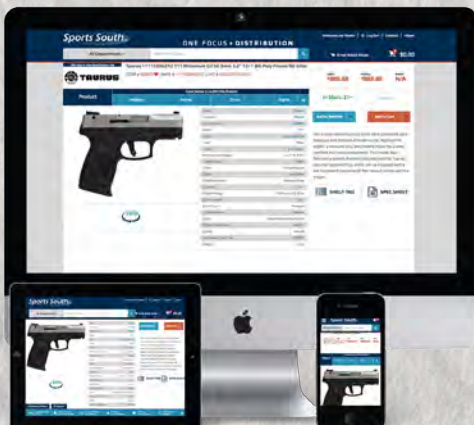
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