

# HUNTING

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July/August 2023

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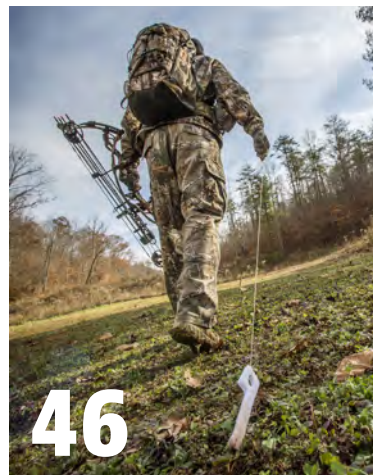
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Known for their exceptional craftsmanship and reliable performance, the KOFs line of shotguns has earned a well-deserved reputation among hunting enthusiasts. With the introduction of the new over-under shotgun, American Tactical has set a new standard in the turkey hunting market. The shotgun is available in 12GA, 20GA, and .410 GA and has a 3" chamber, catering to the diverse needs of hunters.

Designed with precision and attention to detail, the Turkey Fowl offers a range of features to enhance the hunting experience. The fiber optic front sights ensure excellent target acquisition, while the high-grade aluminum receiver provides strength and durability without adding unnecessary weight. The single selective trigger allows for quick and seamless switching between barrels, enabling hunters to adapt to different shooting scenarios effortlessly.

With its 22" barrel length, the shotgun strikes the perfect balance between maneuverability and accuracy. Whether you're hunting in dense forests or open fields, this shotgun delivers consistent and reliable performance. Additionally, the shotgun comes with a drilled and tapped receiver, allowing hunters to mount accessories such as a weaver rail 417T for attaching optics or other tactical enhancements. The

XXFull choke tubes provide versatility, enabling hunters to customize their shot patterns based on their specific preferences and hunting conditions

Priced at an MSRP of \$699.95, the American Tactical Turkey Fowl Over/Under Shotgun offers exceptional value for its premium features. Customers can purchase this shotgun with confidence, knowing that it comes fully warranted by American Tactical, a trusted name in the industry.

To stay updated with the latest news, product releases, and promotions from American Tactical, we invite you to follow us on social media platforms such as Facebook.com/americanacticalsc and Instagram.com/AmericanTactical.us. Our social media profiles are regularly updated to keep our valued customers engaged and informed.

#### **ABOUT AMERICAN TACTICAL:**

In addition to being a prominent US-based manufacturer, American Tactical serves as a global importer of firearms, ammunition, and tactical equipment. By sourcing products from around the world, they ensure a diverse and comprehensive product lineup that caters to the needs and preferences of their customers. While they offer an extensive range of international products, American Tactical also takes pride in manufacturing numerous items within the United States, providing buyers with American-made options that meet the highest standards of quality and reliability.

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# Help Employees Hit the Ground Running

Good onboarding programs favor productivity over forms and formalities.

BY KEN WYSOCKY

**S**tudies show that on average, about one-third of new employees quit their jobs within the first six months after getting hired. That's really bad news for employers contending with the double-whammy of a shrinking labor pool and plentiful jobs, not to mention the high cost of training employees that leave before providing a return on that investment.

With these factors in mind, it's easy to understand why experts say that effective onboarding programs that make employees feel engaged and energized from the get-go are more important than ever.

John Sullivan, a professor of management at San Francisco State Uni-

versity in San Francisco, suggests using a strategic, data-driven approach to onboarding that capitalizes on new employees' enthusiasm instead of stifling it with mind-numbing meetings and meet-and-greets.

"People come in excited about their new job and what they get is death-by-form — read this manual, fill out this form," says Sullivan, an author, speaker and business consultant who's helped dozens of companies develop effective onboarding programs. "By the end of that first day, all their excitement is gone."

In addition, poor onboarding raises other risks, says Sullivan, the author of *The Onboarding & Orientation Toolkit: Tools That Get New*

*Employees and Transfers Productive Faster*. It puts new hires in a position to unknowingly damage customer relations or anger colleagues who believe they're carrying too much of the load when new hires don't get up to speed fast.

## POSITIONED TO SUCCEED

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

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

The second-most important goal is employee retention. That can be achieved by assigning new employees a "peer buddy;" holding "get-to-know-you" events that hasten the networking process; providing them with answers to frequently asked questions, developed by surveying previous new hires; showing them possible career paths within the organization; and clearly spelling out goals and expectations, Sullivan says.

In addition, a new hire's manager should be present on the first day and consistently offer them attention, encouragement and training.

"Managers should own the onboarding process," he says.

In the end, onboarding programs





should be systematically evaluated. For example, quiz managers about why certain employees become productive faster and use the findings to establish better onboarding protocols. Also ask new hires what worked best during onboarding — and what didn't work, too.

“The key questions are what helped them be productive faster and what prevented them producing more earlier,” Sullivan says. “Good data comes from real people.”

### GET AT IT QUICKLY

Jeff Haden, a noted keynote speaker, writer and business adviser, suggests a results-oriented approach to onboarding in which newbies hit the ground running instead of the usual bevy of formal lunches and meet-and-greet sessions.

“Everyone is rightly concerned about inclusion, diversity and making people feel comfortable and part of a team,” says Haden. “That’s all very positive.”

“But I think things have shifted too far to that side,” he continues. “You’re hired to do a job. And as a new employee, you’re a little nervous about getting along with people, but a lot more nervous about doing the actual job.”

Sure, there’s still a place for making introductions on new employees’ behalf. But Haden prefers less emphasis on relationship-building, which will happen organically over time, and more on becoming a contributing employee as fast as possible. There’s a narrow window of time to make a strong, lasting impression on new hires, so managers should send a message that they’re working for a performance-based organization that values results.

Moreover, giving new employees a chance to succeed right away makes them feel better about themselves.

It also enables managers to more quickly determine if employees have the skills to succeed.

### PROVIDE IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK

Another common managerial mistake is not letting new employees know when they make mistakes, for fear of making an already anxious rookie



even more nervous, damaging their confidence or breaking their spirit. Nonsense, Haden says.

“If it’s important enough to do, it’s important enough to do it right. Step in and in a tactful, constructive and positive way, explain the right way to do something. If you want to create a performance culture, you have to actively build one. You can’t step back and just hope that somehow, someone will get there.”

The opposite also is true. Haden doesn’t believe that managers should encourage new employees to critique processes and procedures until they’ve been on the job for a significant period of time. As he puts it, employees shouldn’t try to reinvent the wheel until they fully understand how the wheel works.

### PREBOARDING PROGRAMS

Other workplaces also employ pre-onboarding — or preboarding — programs, which are aimed at easing the new hire’s equivalent of buyer’s remorse during those weeks between accepting a job and actually starting to work. Radio silence from an employer during that period can promote second-guessing that can

workspace and restroom locations, any dress code requirements, places to eat lunch and any documents they’ll need to bring.

### PROVIDE ADVANCE INTEL

Managers also should provide a detailed job description and summary of expectations, a company and department organizational chart (including photos of people, if possible), a workplace map and a summary of the company’s culture, mission and short- and long-term goals.

Managers also might want to invite new hires to come to work for a tour or have lunch with members of their new team. And if incoming employees are relocating, managers could also offer to help with apartment- or house-hunting. They also could assign someone from the new hire’s team to serve as a local ambassador to help them acclimate to their new surroundings.

To help new employees quickly get up to speed on their first day at work, think about sending paperwork ahead of time; filling out forms for hours on the first day at work is a total buzzkill.

One more thing: Don’t forget to monitor your pre-boarding program’s effectiveness by having new employees critique it. A few weeks after they start, sit down and ask them about their experience and if there’s anything that could’ve made it better.

While there are many other things companies can do to make preboarding a meaningful experience, keep in mind that anything is better than the silent treatment after job acceptance. Think about what would make you feel welcome and enthused — what would help validate your decision to accept a job and get you excited to hit the ground running. **HR**

quickly squelch a new hire’s sense of excitement and enthusiasm.

In simplest terms, preboarding fills that time gap with activities and events aimed at quelling those inevitable nagging doubts, workplace experts say.

Preboarding can take many forms. For starters, consider sending out an introductory company-wide email to announcing the new hire. Managers also could send a personal email, encouraging new hires to contact them if any questions arise.

Managers also can ease first-day jitters by providing information about the myriad nerve-racking details that most new employees want to know before they arrive — things such as parking and transportation options, what time work starts and ends,



# Hunting Knives

Stocking a variety of folders, fixed-blades and replaceable-blade hunting knives will help you hit every price point. Try these three models.



BY MARK CHESNUT

**N**o matter what kind of game your customers choose to hunt — from upland birds to waterfowl to big-game species like deer and elk, or even all of the above — a good, high-quality hunting knife is an absolute necessity when it comes time to gear up. Hunting knives are also reasonably priced enough that most hunters choose to have an assortment of them, and many of those same hunters are happy to add to their collection year after year.

Fortunately for hunters and hunting retailers alike, today's hunting knives are better than ever, with advanced steel that holds an edge longer and will also hold up to the harshest of treatment. Knowing what to look for, and what to steer your customers toward, takes a little research, however.

Studying blade steel can be overwhelming. Just know that there are several

varieties of steel, ranging from high end S30V that combines toughness, wear and rust resistance down to less expensive medium-carbon stainless steel blades that aren't nearly as hard but are much easier to sharpen.

Likewise, points run from clip points and drop points to even spear-point blades and blades with gut hooks. All have specific jobs that they are better for, and some, like the clip point, are good for a variety of hunting tasks. Likewise, handle materials vary from wood and polymer to micarta and G10 (more expensive, but offering better grip and wear).

Modern hunting knives basically come in one of three broad types — fixed blade, folding and knives with replaceable blades. Let's take a look at one of each that might just catch the eye of a few of your customers in the coming year.







#### FOLDER: BUCK KNIVES 110

A lightweight version of the company's fabled 110 Hunter, the 110 Hunter LT is made with lightweight moldable nylon, drastically reducing its weight while retaining the same legendary quality as the original 110 Hunter.

The razor-sharp 3.75-inch 420HC tumbled finish, clip-point blade is just right for detailed work like piercing and cutting in tight places, and it features a nail notch for extra grip when opening the knife. Buck chose the 420HC blade material because it approaches the wear resistance of high-carbon alloys while delivering the corrosion resistance of chromium stainless steel. The blade is hardened to a Rockwell hardness of Rc 58. The knife's lockback design ensures it stays open safely and securely during use.

Folded, the 110 Hunter LT measures only 4.87 inches long and easily slips into a pocket for carrying. Blade thickness is 0.12 inches and overall length when open is 8.625 inches. The knife's durable polymer handle features scales with texture for keeping a tight grip when things get wet and nasty, and dual thumb studs allow for ambidextrous use.

With its strength, light weight and utilitarian design, Buck touts the 110 Hunter LT as being "perfect for those who want a full-sized folder in a lightweight package." At the low end of the price range for a quality hunting knife, the knife has an MSRP of \$37.99 and comes with a black polyester belt sheath. The knife also carries Buck's outstanding Forever Warranty for lifetime repair or replacement.



#### FIXED BLADE: OKC RAT-3 CAPER AND SKINNER

Ontario Knife Company (OKC) has been making knives for more than 130 years, and in that time they've learned a thing or two. This year the folks at OKC have added two new knife models specifically made for hunters to their popular RAT series of knives — the RAT-3 Caper and RAT-3 Skinner.

As most hunters know, having the right tool at their disposal once that buck, boar or bull hits the ground can make all the difference in the world. The RAT-3 Caper has all the features needed to make it just right for a number of different field tasks once the game has been harvested.

The RAT-3 Caper features a 3-inch, 1075 phosphate-coated high-carbon steel drop-point blade and has an overall length of 8.25 inches. The Caper has additional space on the neck to move your thumb up for more detail control, along with a large finger choil for optimal comfort. Blade thickness is 0.11 inch, handle

length is 4.05 inches and total weight is 4.8 ounces.

The Skinner features a large belly with great curvature perfect for skinning game or providing support during small chopping tasks. Also crafted from quality 1075 phosphate-coated high-carbon steel, the blade measures 3.75 inches and overall length is 7.65 inches. Blade width is 0.12 inches, handle length is 4 inches and total weight of the knife is 7 ounces.

Both models are 100 percent made in the United States, and both incorporate the popular RAT-3 tan Micarta handle, which offers hunters a comfortable, solid grip even if it gets wet or bloody when field dressing game. With an MSRP of \$68.95, the RAT-3 Caper comes equipped with a full-blade leather sheath with retention strap and belt-loop style carrying.





**REPLACEABLE BLADE: OUTDOOR EDGE RAZORPRO S**

It's likely that just about every hunter has experienced the frustration of needing his or her knife for a task only to find the blade too dull for the job. Replaceable blades are all the rage, mainly because hunters are always assured of having a razor-sharp edge when they need it. Of course, a super-sharp knife is not just more efficient for the task at hand, but also safer, since the user doesn't have to hack and slash in an effort to overcome a dull blade.

For 2023, Outdoor Edge has expanded its popular RazorPro family of RazorSafe replaceable-blade hunting knives with the new RazorPro S. The new RazorPro S is a modification to one of Outdoor Edge's best-selling knives, the original RazorPro G double folder. The new S version has been modified to include a bone saw made of 65 MN spring steel for wear resistance and toughness combined with the 3.5-inch replaceable drop-point blade. Further specifications include an overall length of 8 inches, razor blade thickness of 0.6 millimeters and a weight of only 8.3 ounces.

The company touts this new model as being the perfect knife combo to take to the field for all-around outdoor use. With its rubberized TPR handle, stainless steel blades and spring steel saw with chrome coating, it is built to withstand the use and abuse of serious outdoor enthusiasts while being small enough to easily fit into a hunter's pocket or daypack for easy all-day access.

At an MSRP of \$89.95, the RazorPro S comes with a camouflage sheath and six drop-point blades so hunters will have a sharp one every time they need it. **HR**



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# 15 Hunting Dog Products to Retrieve More Sales

Hunters spend big on their canine companions, and these products will help them make the most of their hunting dogs.

BY KEVIN REESE

As young pups go, Ninja, a black Labrador, was an anxious one with a passion for splashing and dashing across any waterway he could find. Fortunately, he learned quickly, and by just six months of age, he stood, stoic, on the tree-mounted platform between my buddy and me as we raised calls on the tails of a small flock of high-flying mallards — they turned back and were soon tolling. The scene was

tense, and Ninja flinched often but remained perched on his platform as the flock finally cupped, committed and swooped down just above the decoys. On my buddy's command, we lit them up, and three birds hit the water.

Ninja was off in a flash and swam a beeline to the closest duck. After two more retrievals, Ninja leapt back onto his platform and waited for his next recovery. Truth be told, I

enjoy watching hunting dogs work as much, perhaps more, than I like doing the shooting. Ninja was young, fit, eager and quite intelligent. In the several years I was fortunate to hunt with my buddy and Ninja, I never once saw that dog fatigue — maybe we didn't shoot enough birds. He was always ready for action.

To be honest, in all my years of hunting, I have never met a hunter who doesn't appreciate the hard,

efficient, committed work of a well-trained dog. Of course, hunting dogs are used in a variety of ways — retrieving ducks, geese and upland birds; baying and catching feral hogs; treeing animals and recovering game. That said, good hunting dogs do not come easily and require investments in care, training and field equipment. As such, here are 15 hunting-dog products designed to help you retrieve more sales.







### LUCKY DUCK LUCKY KENNELS

Lucky Duck has forged quite a reputation for producing decoys; however, the company also delivers the premium hunting-dog goods. A shining example is the Lucky Kennel, which boasts a 5-star crash test rating from the Center for Pet Safety, rugged yet lightweight rotomolded construction, and injection-molded reversible door, robust vents for air circulation, non-slip rubber feet, stainless steel hardware, lift handles and powder-coated tie-downs. Lucky Duck also states Lucky Kennels are tested to handle up to 4,000 pounds of force, including a 630-pound drop test. Lucky Kennels are available in intermediate and large sizes. [www.luckyduck.com](http://www.luckyduck.com)



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The Alpha Dog Blind is completely collapsible and light weight, coming in at a hair over 4.5 pounds, and it offers great protection from the elements while also concealing your dog in between retrieves. The Alpha Dog Blind is constructed of a 600D polyester fabric canopy and durable, padded 900D polyester floor. This blind also features magnetic-closure doors on both ends with an added buckle closure on the back, Realtree camo exterior, blacked-out interior, and footprint dimensions of 19 x 21 x 37 inches. The Alpha Dog Blind also includes ground stakes, a paracord carrying handle and a convenient, zippered, should-carry bag. [www.alpsoutdoorz.com](http://www.alpsoutdoorz.com)

### GARMIN ALPHA 200I HANDHELD COLLAR

Recognized as a global leader in tracking and navigation, Garmin commits this technology to the aid of our best friends in the field, too — case in point, the Garmin Alpha 200i. The Garmin Alpha 200i includes a handheld controller and tracker and trainer (TT) collar. At just 2.7 inches x 6.4 inches, the IPX7 waterproof-rated Alpha 200i handheld fits comfortably in most palms yet boasts a comfortable viewing experience on a 1.8 x 3-inch touchscreen display. The Garmin Alpha 200i comes equipped with a 16gb internal memory, rechargeable lithium-ion battery for up to 20 hours of operation, pre-loaded TopoActive maps, satellite imagery, LiveTrack, barometric altimeter, compass, tracking log and pack management for up to 20 dogs via TT and T collars. [www.garmin.com](http://www.garmin.com)



### SPORTDOG SPORTTRAINER 1275

As one partnered with a German Shorthaired Pointer and plugged into hunt-test and field-trial competitions, we relied upon SportDog training collars more than any other electronic dog training system on the market. Of course, technology and training solutions have improved dramatically since then, and SportDog puts those advances to work in the SportDog SportTrainer 1275. The IP67 waterproof-rated SportTrainer 1275 features three-quarters of a mile of range and a pack management capacity up to six dogs. The handheld device includes a large OLED display with clear representations of 10 stimulation levels, selected dog, mode and remaining battery life. Large, tactile controls make adjusting stimulation levels and selecting dogs simple, while side-mounted controls control continuous and momentary stimulation. The collar fits dogs over 8 pounds and features stimulation modes as well as a power button. [www.sportdog.com](http://www.sportdog.com)





### MUD RIVER DOG PRODUCTS HANDLER BAG

Caring for, managing and training dogs can mean carrying a lot of gear. The Mud River Dog Handler Bag allows your hunting-dog owners to stow and carry everything they need in a well-organized manner. The Dog Handler Bag is constructed of a heavy-duty, water-resistant polyester shell and includes an adjustable, padded shoulder strap. The bag also includes an array of storage pockets, roomy front zippered pocket, large doctor's-bag center storage and a double-reinforced, water-resistant bottom shell. The Mud River Dog Handler Bag measures 16 x 11 x 14 inches. [www.boytharness.com](http://www.boytharness.com)



### DOG BONE PUPPY STARTER BUNDLE

Outfitting for hunting dog training doesn't have to be a hard hunt. Several hunting-dog training brands offer startup kits. A favorite among many handlers is the DogBone Puppy Starter Bundle. The kit provides a solid assortment of basic training tools without breaking your customer's budget. The DogBone Puppy Starter Kit includes a roomy training bag, whistle, adjustable leader and a collapsible water bowl. The kit also comes with two downloadable videos: *Puppy Training* and *DogBone Basics: Building a Solid Foundation*. [www.dogbonehunter.com](http://www.dogbonehunter.com)



### GUN DOG OUTDOORS FIELD TRAUMA AID KIT

The GunDog Field Trauma Kit keeps every critical first-aid component organized and easy to access. Gun Dog Outdoors touts the kit as an assortment of supplies ready to handle any kind of traumatic dog injury. The kit includes everything one might need to effectively treat punctures, cuts, abrasions, hyperthermia, hypothermia, sprains and more. The kit even includes a veterinarian-approved Field Trauma Guide on handling seizures, snakebites and other common dog injuries. [www.gundogoutdoors.com](http://www.gundogoutdoors.com)



### SOUTHERN CROSS SPEC-OPS CATCH PRO VEST WITH HIGH COLLAR

Many hunters use dogs to chase small game and, in the context of this gear roundup, feral hogs; in fact, a number of states allow hog hunting with dogs. That said, hogs can be vicious and downright dangerous. A hog's cutters can easily rip through flesh, and infections from such injuries can be life-threatening. Hog-hunting dogs must be protected, and Southern Cross' American-made Spec-Ops Catch Pro Vest with High Collar is a great peace-of-mind choice, especially for catch-dogs. The Spec-Ops Catch Pro Vest boasts an attached high-collar, gel-enhanced tracking-collar protection, seatbelt-enhanced chest, double-phase leg guards with armpit protection, chin guard, chest and side-lead D-rings and 2X Dupont Kevlar armor. Sizing options are XS to XL, and fabric finishes are available in hunter orange or TrueTimber Kanati camouflage. [www.hogdoggear.com](http://www.hogdoggear.com)



### BANDED BOATER'S DOG PARKA

Like Banded's Kennel Covers, their Boater's Dog Parka also serves a dual purpose — both focused on pet safety. Most obvious, the Boater's Dog Parka provides much-needed insulating warmth in cold, wet hunting environments where hypothermia is a concern. In and out of the water, the Boater's Dog Parka helps keep body temperature at a safer level. The not-so obvious secondary benefit of the Boater's Dog Parka is buoyancy. The parka enhances a dog's flotation during retrieval. The results are mitigated cold-weather exposure and reduced fatigue. Who doesn't want to enhance their four-legged friend's outdoor experiences? Boater's Dog Parkas are available in sizes Extra Small to 5XL and feature tapered 5mm neoprene, double-tacked seams, full-length zipper cover, cold-weather zipper pull and built-in carrying handles.







### ALPS OUTDOORZ DOG STAND

Duck hunting in flooded timber can be hard on a hunter and brutal on a working dog. When hunting in water, it's important to get man's best friend out of the water and up on a platform, and I've seen quite an eclectic array of solutions, from lock-on treestand floors to suspended pallets and homemade plywood supports; of course, not all dog stands are mobile or lightweight. If your hunters are in the market for a collapsible, lightweight, easy-to-tote platform, the Alps Outdoorz Dog Stand is worth your inventory space.



### DOGBONE GAME RECOVERY SYSTEM TRAINING KIT

Not all hunting dogs are built for chasing down feral hogs, treeing raccoons or retrieving gamebirds. Some are trained to track blood and recover big game. For trainers, finding entry-level resources can be tough. Fortunately, DogBone offers great kits like the Tracking Dog Training System. This robust kit includes a RealHide drag, EZ clip, 10-foot drag line, 2-ounce bottle of BloodTrail scent, and an instruction manual — everything your customers need to get their hunting dogs on the scent trail.



### SPORTDOG NATURAL CANVAS DUMMY

When it comes to retrieval training, dummies are a must-have, and models like SportDog's Natural Canvas Dummy reign supreme. Why? Canvas dummies retain game scent for much longer than their plastic counterparts. They float, too, offering the best of both worlds. While SportDog is a trusted training brand, there's more to canvas dummies than material. The SportDog Natural Canvas Dummy mimics game size and weight and is even weighted for improved throwing. The Natural Canvas Dummy includes a throwing rope and is offered in puppy and adult sizes.



### DOKKEN DEAD FOWL MALLARD TRAINER

Training pups to retrieve and release without destroying game can be challenging — nobody likes a decimated bird. Dokken offers a great solution in the Dead Fowl Trainer Mallard, a decoy designed specifically to improve a hunting dog's game handling. The Dead Fowl Trainer Mallard features a free-floating head and legs, as well as natural-feel foam to better mimic real game. For added realism, the Dead Fowl Trainer allows for internal scenting and is similar in weight to a real mallard. [www.deadfowltrainer.com](http://www.deadfowltrainer.com)

### PETE RICKARD'S HUNTING DOG TRAINING SCENTS

With more than 50 years of hunting scent experience and, more importantly, as many years of reputation building among serious trainers and hardcore hunters, Pete Rickard's Hunting Dog Training Scents is respected worldwide as a training-scent industry leader. Perhaps equally impressive is the company's robust line of scents — they certainly offer the widest array of training scent products I am aware of and cover virtually all North American hunting scenarios where dogs are known to work, including bear, wild boar, wildcat, fox, raccoon, rabbit, squirrel, goose, duck, pheasant, quail, grouse and dove. Most important for scent training, Pete Rickard's offerings are formulated with natural musks and extracts for true-to-life scents, perfect for effective tracking and game recovery. The company also offers effective scent training kits. [www.peterickard.com](http://www.peterickard.com)



**archery**  
BUSINESS



## THE ARCHERY BUSINESS PAVILION AT SHOT SHOW IN 2024

The word is out: *Archery Business*, the voice of the archery industry for nearly 50 years, has teamed up with NSSF's SHOT Show to bring you the Archery Business Pavilion.

The Archery Business Pavilion will be a NEW part of SHOT Show focused on outdoor, hunting, archery and crossbow companies brought together in a common space.

### WHO CAN EXHIBIT?

Any manufacturer of outdoor, hunting, archery and crossbow related products.

### DATES AND HOST CITY?

The next SHOT Show is in Las Vegas, Nevada, from Jan. 23 through Jan. 26, 2024.

### WHERE IS THIS NEW SPACE LOCATED?

You'll find the Archery Business Pavilion in Caesars Forum in the Academy Ballroom.

### HOW CAN YOU EXHIBIT?

See the page to the right.

### WHAT ELSE SHOULD YOU KNOW?

- Exhibit space is limited, and it's first come, first served
- In future years, those who exhibited in 2024 will have first choice for space
- The *Archery Business* team, including editors and key staff, will be in the ballroom working on best ways to cover and promote companies that exhibit
- Additional coverage about the Archery Business Pavilion will appear in *SHOT Daily* during the show and within the pages of other B2B brands such as *Archery Business* and *Shooting Sports Retailer* as we get closer to SHOT Show.



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BUSINESS



# THE ARCHERY BUSINESS PAVILION

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AND JOIN THE GROWING LIST OF EXHIBITORS  
ALREADY IN THE PAVILION



LIMITED SPACE AVAILABLE NOW,  
FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED.

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JANUARY 23-26, 2024, CAESARS FORUM LAS VEGAS, NV  
INTERESTED IN ATTENDING THE SHOT SHOW? GO TO [SHOTSHOW.ORG](http://SHOTSHOW.ORG)

FOR INFORMATION ON EXHIBITING IN THE ARCHERY BUSINESS PAVILION, CONTACT:

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PATRICK BOYLE [PATRICK.BOYLE@GRANDVIEWOUTDOORS.COM](mailto:PATRICK.BOYLE@GRANDVIEWOUTDOORS.COM) (920) 240-7280

# FOXPRO: American-Made Excellence

As a leader in the predator-hunting space, FOXPRO is making some big introductions in 2023 and encourages dealers to take advantage.

BY HR STAFF

**E**very coyote hunter worth his or her salt is familiar with FOXPRO and the company's electronic calls. *Hunting Retailer* spoke to Mike Dillon (pictured at right), general manager of FOXPRO, to get his take on the state of the predator-hunting industry, the history of the FOXPRO brand, and more.

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

**MD:** FOXPRO is the epitome of the American Dream come true. What started out as a father's vision to develop an easier, more portable way for his sons to take sound equipment out fox hunting has turned into the largest predator-hunting company in the world and the No. 1 choice for predator hunters. It was a perfect storm, as at the same time, the coyote's population began to soar in many states that have never had coyotes before.

**HR:** What do you think FOXPRO does better than anyone else in your category, and why are so many hunters devoted to your products?

**MD:** Hunters in general are very conservative, with a high sense of patriotism. FOXPRO takes great pride in manufacturing our products right here in the United States. Not assembled, but everything from hardware and software engineering, surface mount placement, assembly, packing, and shipping are all done right here in Lewistown, Pennsylvania. We are



the only ones in the industry that can make that claim.

FOXPRO truly revolutionized the predator market by offering the features that predator hunters were really looking for. We created a portable call with great volume capabilities to replace the outdated cassette and record players of the past — a truly digital caller with no moving parts. They were originally housed in a Rayovac flashlight housing, until

we were able to offer a new molded design. Ever notice how most of the callers of today look like this? Our designs have been copied, our decoys have been copied, but our innovation simply cannot be matched.

As the predator market evolved, so has FOXPRO. We are proud to offer a caller for every predator hunter — whether they are looking for an affordable caller with basic features, or the most advanced predator-call-

ing unit in the market today, we have a call for everyone. Our features are also truly second to none, and our sound library offers more than 500 of the highest quality sounds. Last, but not least, our customer service is simply unmatched. We can repair units well after the warranty has expired, and we stand behind our units, as we have for more than 20 years.

So, it's pretty simple. Made in the USA. Best products. Best features. Best customer service. That has been our key to success and will continue to be our recipe for many years to come.

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

**MD:** With the evolution of predator hunting, it has created a more advanced predator hunter, one who wants to simply arm themselves with more advanced units to give them the edge they need to be more successful in the field. Sometimes the edge is in higher volume capabilities, with clear, non-distorted sound. And sometimes the edge is with more advanced features to change the way they call while on stand, or to assist them in helping to choose the best environment conditions to hunt it (barometric pressure, moon phase, etc.).

FOXPRO has you covered with all of these. We offer the loudest, clearest units in the market, as well as those with the most advanced features. If I had to pick just one of our products that has seen the highest growth late-







↑ FOXPRO Hellcat

ly, it would be the X24. But we will soon be releasing some new units that I think will trump this growth.

**HR:** Is there developing technology that might change the way shooters buy or use electronic calls in the future?

**MD:** In the electronics world, there is always new technology coming out that can offer the consumer a better product. This is where FOXPRO shines. We are constantly releasing new products to keep up with this ever-changing offering of new technology. If you go back 20 years to the callers we offered then, you will easily see a huge improvement in technology. What was considered a high-end call back then is an entry-level call in today's market. And this new technology allows us to engineer the more advanced features that FOXPRO is known for.

**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?

**MD:** Unfortunately, I believe we will see a decline in the overall number of hunters in the marketplace. Even with all the outreach programs in place that are designed to introduce new people to the sport, the overall trend tends to be a decline in overall numbers. However, there are opportunities in the marketplace. Hunters will continue to evolve and demand more advanced products and features. And predator hunting will continue to be the one segment that every hunter out there should take a vested interest in. Whether they hunt deer, turkey, elk, waterfowl, etc., predation will impact the population. Every hunter out there should do their part in conservation and reap the benefits hunting predators. Plus, in many states, you can enjoy it year-round. If you are a dealer reading this, and you don't offer preda-

tor-hunting products, you may want to think about adding some predator products in your store.

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

**MD:** As I touched on earlier, opportunity for growth comes with offering higher-end units with more advanced features, as this is the trend that has been apparent in the past few years. Also, expanding the product offerings and accessories to predator hunters. Plus, I've got some other ideas for growth, but now is not the time to talk about that yet.

In terms of shrinking, it is becoming more and more obvious that lower-end units are falling in popularity. Dealers who simply try to stock the cheapest calls they can get are seeing them sit on the shelf and must deeply discount to move them. My advice to dealers reading this is to put more emphasis on some higher-end units,

regardless of what they believe to be true about predator hunters in their area. Sometimes this is a hard decision for a dealer to make, but I can assure you they will reap the benefits of doing this.

**HR:** What can we expect out of FOXPRO in the middle of 2023? What products have you most excited for the future?

**MD:** 2023 is an exciting year for FOXPRO. We will be releasing more new products this year than we have ever had in our history. Everything from top to bottom is changing in our lineup this year. We will have a new entry-level unit, a new flagship unit, and many new products in between. And as always, proudly made in the USA. But the one that I am excited the most about is the X360. There are so many new advanced features in this unit that it will simply redefine a digital game call. Everything is changing with this unit — audio capabilities, audio frequency range, many new advanced features, programming methods, sound dispersion, etc. The list goes on.

**HR:** How does FOXPRO support its dealers?

**MD:** FOXPRO has always stood behind our dealers. Almost all our digital game calls are protected by MRP (minimum retail pricing), which dealers truly enjoy, as it protects their margins on units. We have the largest network of dealers of predator-hunting products when compared to any competitor, and most will tell you the same thing. They don't have a predator category without FOXPRO. FOXPRO is their predator category.

If a dealer ever has any issues, they can reach out to us at any time, and we can assist them with whatever their needs may be. We have truly





simplified the ordering process for our dealers, giving them an online portal tool to accomplish this if they so desire. And if they ever have outdated products, we work with them to make sure they have the newest products to offer their customers. In an environment where many competitors are shifting focus away from dealers and onto online sales such as Amazon, FOXPRO's goal is to continue to grow our dealer base. Of course, we will sell online as well, but not at the expense of gouging profit margins to our dealers.

**HR:** Do you have any advice for retailers about selling electronic calls and FOXPRO calls specifically?

**MD:** My advice to any dealer looking to sell electronic calls is to first realize what brand is the leading brand in the category and why. Be proud to tell your customers that, especially in today's environment, you are proud



to offer an American-made product that has been the clear No. 1 choice of consumers for over 20 years.

When looking at the different products to bring in, many first-time dealers make the mistake of looking at the lowest-priced units. I can't tell you how many dealers have made this mistake, not truly understanding

the strength of the FOXPRO brand at the higher price points. When they finally bring the higher-priced units in, they quickly realize the mistake they made. I would still carry some of the entry-level units, but make sure you also bring in the higher-priced units. If they don't buy them from you, they'll purchase them elsewhere.

#### ← FOXPRO Prowler

And lastly, the FOXPRO customers are some of the most loyal customers you could ask for, with a high majority of our customers purchasing upgraded units as we release new products.

**HR:** What's your personal favorite FOXPRO product, and why?

**MD:** My favorite FOXPRO unit has not been released yet [at the time of this interview], but it will be this summer. And I can't wait to tell you more about it when it's released!

**HR:** Is there anything you'd like retailers to know about FOXPRO and its products?

**MD:** There is no better time than this year to bring predator products into your store, if you haven't yet.

#### ↑ FOXPRO x360

Unlike many of the other hunting categories, you can enjoy year-round sales with the FOXPRO brand. And you will have the confidence of knowing that you are offering your customers the worldwide leader in digital game calls. We're an email or phone call away, and you will have peace in mind in knowing that our American-made products are simply the most sought-after products in the industry.

Whether your customer is looking for an affordable, entry level caller, or the most advanced feature rich caller available today, FOXPRO has them covered. If you're interested in becoming a dealer, email us at [sales@gofoxpro.com](mailto:sales@gofoxpro.com) or simply call us at 866-GOFOXPRO (463-6977). Check us out at [www.gofoxpro.com](http://www.gofoxpro.com). **HR**





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# THE ARCHERY BUSINESS PAVILION AT SHOT SHOW IN 2024

The Archery Business Pavilion will be a NEW part of SHOT Show focused on outdoor, hunting, archery and crossbow companies brought together in a common space.

BY ARCHERY BUSINESS STAFF

**N**SSF, The Firearm Industry Trade Association, has announced the creation of a new exhibit area for the archery industry at NSSF's annual SHOT Show. This exciting new venture is a collaboration between NSSF and Grand View Outdoors, a leading provider of outdoor news and information. (*Archery Business* and *Bowhunting World* magazines are part of the Grand View Outdoors family of brands.)

The SHOT Show attracts attendees from around the

world each year, including buyers, media and other industry professionals. The show covers more than 816,000 net square feet of exhibit space, featuring over 2,500 companies showcasing the latest in firearms, ammunition, hunting and shooting accessories, outdoor apparel and much more. Held annually in Las Vegas, it is the largest and most comprehensive trade show for professionals involved with the shooting sports and hunting industries.

## SHOWCASING ARCHERY AND OUTDOOR GEAR

Recognizing a reciprocal need for both firearm and archery retailers to broaden their businesses, the new archery area, branded the Archery Business Pavilion, will feature exhibits from leading manufacturers and suppliers in the archery industry, offering attendees the opportunity to see and experience the latest in archery technology and products. The show area will be designed to provide a comprehensive look at the industry, from traditional archery equipment to cutting-edge technology.

"We're thrilled to open up this new segment of the outdoor industry to our attendees," said Chris Dolnack, NSSF Senior Vice President and Chief Customer Officer. "Archery has always been a complementary retail addition for many of our



members, and we believe that this new show area will provide the perfect platform for archery manufacturers and suppliers to showcase their products to thousands of buyers, media and industry professionals."

Grand View Outdoors President

Derrick Nawrocki added, "This partnership with NSSF represents a significant opportunity for the archery industry to come together and demonstrate the innovation, technology and creativity that defines archery with the SHOT Show.



“Our *Archery Business* brand has been a rock-solid guide for archery manufacturers and dealers for nearly 50 years. Many consider *Archery Business* to be the ‘Voice of the Archery Industry,’ providing retailers with cutting-edge gear reviews, exclusive looks at top brands, and constantly provides key intel to help drive more business in their shops.”

**ARCHERY BUSINESS PAVILION SPECIFICS**

- The new Archery Business Pavilion will be located within the upcoming annual SHOT Show in Las Vegas, Nevada, from Jan. 23 through Jan. 26, 2024.
- Any manufacturer of outdoor, hunting, archery and crossbow related products can exhibit in the new Archery Business Pavilion.
- You’ll find the Archery Business Pavilion in Caesars Forum in the Academy Ballroom.
- Exhibit space is limited, and it’s first come, first served.
- In future years, those who exhibited in 2024 will have first choice for space.
- The *Archery Business* team, including editors and key staff, will be in the ballroom working on best ways to cover and promote companies that exhibit.
- Additional coverage about the Archery Business Pavilion will appear in *SHOT Daily* during the show and within the pages of other B2B brands such as *Archery Business*, *Hunting Retailer* and *Shooting Sports Retailer* as we get closer to SHOT Show.

**BOOKING YOUR SPACE**

To see the Archery Business Pavilion floor plan, visit [www.SHOTShow.org/archeryfloorplan](http://www.SHOTShow.org/archeryfloorplan). As stated previously, this space will be located in Caesars Forum. If you’re looking at a map of the entire SHOT Show space, the Archery Business Pavilion is in the Caesars Forum area showing SHOT Show University, meeting rooms, etc.

For more information on booking a booth space, visit [www.SHOT-Show.org/archeryexhibit](http://www.SHOT-Show.org/archeryexhibit). Note: Booth space will not be final until this application is completed and the initial deposit is made.

**EARLY EXHIBITORS WEIGH IN**



**SIMS VIBRATION LABORATORY/ LIMBSAVER — ALAN LOTTON, VICE PRESIDENT**

“My coworkers can attest to how excited I’ve been regarding the addition of the new Archery Business Pavilion at the 2024 Shot Show, and I am positive it will be a huge success,” said Sims Vibration Laboratory Vice President Alan Lotton. “I always wondered why the NSSF never found a way to embrace the archery category better, but now with *Archery Business*’ full support, it’s become a reality, and I (LimbSaver) can’t wait to be part of the groundbreaking event. After 18 consecutive years exhibiting at the annual Shot Show, having a second location dedicated to archery will provide retail buyers with



a category-focused opportunity, verses having to wade through a gauntlet of the firearm and tactical exhibitors. LimbSaver is extremely excited to support *Archery Business* and the NSSF’s expansion at the upcoming iconic Shot Show in Las Vegas, Nevada.”

The LimbSaver firearm booth #10570 will be located on the main SHOT Show floor, which is adjacent to the sky bridge connecting to the Caesars Forum and Archery Business Pavilion, where you will find LimbSaver Archery in booth #80712.

The **True-Track Stabilizer** is the latest model launched by Sims Vibration Laboratory (2023); Lotton says that based on popularity, the company will be expanding the True-Track line in 2024, showcasing its products at its new digs in the Archery Business Pavilion. [www.limbsaver.com](http://www.limbsaver.com)



**ARES ARCHERY — RACHEL PENNINGTON, VP OPERATIONS**

“As ARES prepares to enter the ‘beta testing’ stage for our Pin Illuminating Rangefinder, we know the fun is just beginning,” said VP Operations Rachel Pennington. “We are eagerly anticipating the start of 2024 and the incredibly unique opportunity to be one of the first exhibitors registered for SHOT Show’s new Archery Business Pavilion. We hope this experience will showcase the years of innovation we have put into our product.”

The newly patented Pin Illuminating Rangefinder from ARES Archery is designed to seamlessly couple its rangefinder to any bowsight, allowing you to lock on to your target and instantly see the appropriate sight distance pin illuminated, while also displaying a digital reading of the distance in yards.

The rangefinder can be dismantled from the bowsight and used as a stand-alone handheld device, easily ranging 1,000 yards.



What makes the new ARES rangefinder stand out to consumers?

- **Affordability:** Coming in with at least a 30 percent lower retail cost than the competition.
- **Easy to install and use:** With only one button and a simple set up.
- **Long-lasting battery:** An integrated specialized battery that will last through thousands of ranges.
- **Lightweight and compact:** Weighing mere ounces (yes, ounces!).
- **Dependability:** Perhaps best of all, ARES boasts a lifetime warranty.

Who is ARES? In February 2021, fate brought together two avid hunters in the New Mexico desert. Bonding through faith and a shared entrepreneurial spirit, the beginnings of ARES (Archery Revolution Equipment Solutions) Limited was founded. In the years that followed, ARES co-founders have moved the company forward finding how each other’s strengths fit together. The partnership has produced a shared desire to build innovative products that will allow hunters to do what they love and ultimately take animals more ethically and effectively.

“The opportunity to have our brand featured in front of thousands of buyers, media, and industry professionals — right next to archery brands that have withstood the test of time, is invaluable to us,” Pennington said. “We believe the days of networking, interacting with industry experts, and attending educational seminars will help propel ARES forward. Come visit us at the Archery Business Pavilion, booth





#80724, and see for yourself what makes ARES Archery stand out from the rest!"

To learn more about the ARES range-finder, sign up for newsletter and updates on the website. [www.aresarchery.com](http://www.aresarchery.com)



### GAS BOWSTRINGS — DESTANY TRENT, CUSTOMER SERVICE AND SALES MANAGER

"We couldn't be more excited about this opportunity!" said GAS Bowstrings Customer Service and Sales Manager Destany Trent. "To be a part of the inauguration of archery into the biggest outdoor show is simply incredible. Bringing archery into SHOT Show will not only bring new relationships and opportunities for growth to our company, but will also open a new market for SHOT Show and its dealers. We hope that in being part of the expansion of SHOT Show we will bring a new era of growth to archery for years to come." By visiting the GAS Bowstrings booth #80410 in the Archery Business Pavilion, you'll see the bowstrings below, as well as many other offerings:



► **GAS Ghost XV Bowstrings** are made to withstand whatever extreme elements and terrain you may encounter on your hunting trip or competition. Made from a premium blend of Vectran and Dyneema

BCY materials, Ghost XV provides the ultimate balance of speed and stability while providing unmatched reliability, durability and longevity in a bowstring. Ghost XV Bowstrings are made with a low-wax BCY material that also has a light coating of color dye. This enables these strings to perform consistently and reduce creep and stretch. When combined with the company's exclusive TTS (Total Tensioning System), the result is superior performance. As with all GAS Bowstrings, the Ghost XV Bowstrings are covered by a 1-year guarantee against peep rotation, serving separation and elongation.

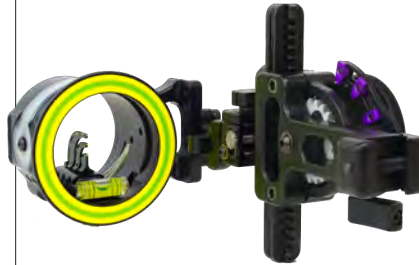
► **GAS Freakshow Bowstrings** are the most consistent and stable bowstrings produced, made to Jesse "The Freakshow" Broadwater's specifications to hold up to any condition or arrow count. Their premium, natural BCY 452x ultra-low wax material provides them with the most consistent performance out of any bowstring. Freakshow Bowstrings feature the company's exclusive TTS (Total Tensioning System) eliminating peep rotation, serving separation, and elongation. In addition, they are built with their own exclusive FTS (Freakshow Thermal System) to add that extra bit of stability that you can't get with any other string set. Coming in the natural, cream-colored string, with clear serving, and black Freakshow shrink tube, they will match just about any bow on the market. Black Powergrip center serving is standard on all Freakshow Bowstrings.

► **High Octane** strings and cables are made from high-quality BCY 452X material in your choice of more than 50 colors and are built using the company's exclusive Total Tensioning System. End servings and speed nocks are also available in your choice of colors. BCY Powergrip center serving is standard on all High Octane Bowstrings. [www.gasbowstrings.com](http://www.gasbowstrings.com)



### SPOT-HOGG ARCHERY PRODUCTS — KRIS CHRISTENSEN, MARKETING MANAGER

"We're excited about the new Archery Business Pavilion at the 2024 SHOT Show," said Marketing Manager Kris Christensen. "We've never attend SHOT before, but the inclusion of an archery specific hall has us intrigued. The last few years has been hard on trade shows, yet SHOT seems to be thriving. We think it will give us a chance to reach new customers. It seems like more and more gun shops are bringing archery into the mix. We also think it's great that a show so well established as SHOT, is giving us the opportunity to get involved.



"Spot-Hogg Archery Products offer a wide variety of sights and releases. They are all made in the USA by a family owned and operated business. Our main focus is to provide a superior product emphasizing accuracy without sacrificing durability. Spot-Hogg products are made to last a lifetime and have a lifetime warranty to back that up."

Stop by the Spot-Hogg booth #80620 in the Archery Business Pavilion to see the company's most popular sight line, the **Fast Eddie series**. It's available in the standard hard mount (FE), a 6-inch dovetail mount (also compatible with Mathews Bridge-Lock bows), and the new Fast Eddie PM, built specifically for bows with a picatinny rail for sight mounting.

Fast Eddie series sights are available with multiple different pin configurations, from a single pin all the way up to seven pins. Spot-Hogg's two most popular

configurations are the Double Pin and Triple Stack; both provide precise yardage details to all pins, regardless of where the dial is set. [www.spot-hogg.com](http://www.spot-hogg.com)



### FERADYNE OUTDOORS — CHRIS JAMES, GENERAL MANAGER OF ARCHERY

"FeraDyne Outdoors is excited to be part of the new Archery Business Pavilion at the 2024 SHOT Show," said General Manager of Archery Chris James. "We feel it will give us a place for buyers to find archery and hunting products more easily in a sea of other categories. This should help retailers use their limited time much more efficiently and allow them to spend more time in person interacting and previewing our innovative lineup for 2024.

"We are excited about our new product offerings, and encourage everyone to take time out to stop by our booth #80507 to learn about the new product offerings that will be crucial to their assortments for 2024."

FeraDyne is parent company to many well-known outdoor brands. James said, "During SHOT Show 2024, we plan on displaying all of our archery and hunting brands to some extent with the exception of Apple, Lid Cam, Leg Cuff, Xpress. A few other brands are slated for new introductions there that we hope make the cut. The brands we will feature will likely be Rage, Muzzy, Tru-Fire, Nockturnal, all of our target brands, IQ Sights, Rocky Mountain Sights, Carbon Express, Rhino Blinds & Treestands, Covert Cameras, Capsule Game Feeders, Scent Crusher and Wicked Tree Gear." [www.feradyne.com](http://www.feradyne.com)





**SKB CASES — STEVE KERPAN, VP OF SPORTS SALES**

"Most archery customers and retailers are well aware of SKB, since we've been producing some of the industry's toughest and most sought-after bow cases for more than 20 years," said VP of Sports Sales Steve Kerpan. "But there is definitely a lot of crossover to the broader SHOT Show audience of outdoor enthusiasts, law enforcement, first responders and military personnel. We're excited for this opportunity to showcase the sheer depth of the industries we serve, with everything from bow and gun cases, to specialty cases for tactical and military applications — if you've got something worth protecting, we likely make a case for it. And you'll be able to see all of SKB's best innovations at our SHOT Show booth #80707 in the Archery Business Pavilion."

On display during SHOT Show 2024 will be a wide variety of SKB offerings, including these two best-sellers:

► **iSeries REV2 Plush Large Parallel Limb Bow Case:** This case features an updated plush interior with upgraded tie-downs for the bow and gear, providing more open space to accommodate more bow models and setups while still allowing for a customized fit. Like all SKB iSeries cases, this one is waterproof, dustproof, and built to military specifications to protect your gear in the harshest

environments. It fits bows up to 41.25 inches long and 16 inches wide.

► **Bow Traveler Case:** Created due to popular demand, this case is the perfect all-in-one solution. It offers a padded, reinforced bottom compartment for a bow, and a separate zippered compartment above for clothing, shoes and other accessories. Despite being lightweight (only 13 pounds empty), it features padded, reinforced handles, heavy duty wheels, and built-in rail guards for maximum durability and easy transport. Case dimensions: 42 x 20 x 13 inches. [www.skbcases.com](http://www.skbcases.com)



**MOULTRIE MOBILE — DANIEL WILSON, GENERAL MANAGER**

"You can expect us to announce some exciting new products from the Moultrie Mobile lineup during SHOT Show 2024," said Moultrie Mobile General Manager Daniel Wilson. "We're excited to be back at SHOT Show for 2024, and the new Archery Business Pavilion offers a great environment for us to showcase our hunting-focused products. Be sure to visit us at booth #80714."

One cellular trail cam that has proven to be very popular during 2023 is the **Moultrie Mobile EDGE Pro** (\$179.99). This camera takes the great things from the EDGE and builds on them for an even better cellular camera. It introduces the False Trigger Elimination (FTE) technology, which reduces environmental and non-target species from triggering the camera. Basically, it sends only the photos a hunter wants. Also, it takes 36-mp photos and 1080p video (with sound). It offers a half-second trigger speed, 100-foot detection range, 100-foot IR flash range, and up to 12 months of battery life. This model also has built-in memory, so no SD card is required. You can even set custom triggering zones,



Also new for 2023 from Moultrie Mobile: A **Universal Solar Battery Pack** (\$99.99) will be introduced this summer to offer customers a durable and dependable power option for trail cameras and feeders that's designed to deliver up to three times more power than existing solar solutions. It features a solar panel that is up to 60 percent larger than current options on the market, in addition to a built-in rechargeable battery capacity of 10,000mAh to provide backup power on overcast days and eliminate the need for AA batteries. Connectors will be included with the Universal Solar Battery Pack to enable compatibility with any brand of camera or feeder kit that accepts a 12v or 6v barrel jack style power input. It also includes a Flex Mount and tree strap ensuring ease of use at any location.

Additional Moultrie Mobile accessories designed for the Edge series cameras set to launch in 2023 include a Rechargeable Battery Pack (\$79.99), a Flex Mount (\$19.99), and a new Security Box (\$34.99). [www.moultriemobile.com](http://www.moultriemobile.com)



**VANTAGE POINT ARCHERY — ALEX CHRISTIANSON, MARKETING MANAGER**

"The success of our customers and dealers is our top priority, that's why we emphasize creating quality and reliable products to ensure our customers can succeed in their archery endeavors," said Marketing Manager Alex Christianson. "We look forward to exhibiting in the Archery Business Pavilion at SHOT Show for the first time this upcoming year. Having attended SHOT

as spectators in the past, we know it's a great opportunity to connect with others in the industry over a shared passion. Our mission at VPA has always been to create and supply durable, American-made broadheads to the market to make bowhunting more ethical — we are confident the SHOT Show will provide us an outlet to share that mission with others."

As you'll see when visiting Vantage Point Archery's booth #80611 at SHOT Show, the company continues to lead the way in precision-machined one-piece broadheads by focusing its product line on quality and durability. With much popularity and high requests, VPA has expanded its **Single Bevel series**. New for 2023, VPA has added a 125-grain and 175-grain Single Bevel to its premium lineup (available in both Right and Left bevel). VPA Single Bevel broadheads have ideal blade thickness, extensive single bevels (35-degree blade angles), and edges that can achieve a razor-sharp cut. Machined from S7 tool steel and depicted



in an OD green Duracote Finish, the ferrule supports the head all the way to the

bone-splitting tip. No weld lines or brazing, chiseled points, and heat treatment up to 58 Rockwell give these broadheads superior strength. Straight-edged, single bevel edges promote deeper penetration and bloodletting by creating spiral wound channels. Premium VPA Single Bevels are available in 125 to 300 grains with a 1 1/8-inch cutting diameter, Right and Left Bevel.

VPA also offers fixed-blade models in two-blade double bevel and three-blade styles, as well as field points, field point kits, small game thumpers, ILF risers, and more. Whether you're interested in maximum FOC, traditional archery, compounds, crossbows, or just looking for a durable, 100% American-made broadhead — VPA has something for you.

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





**SUBMIT YOUR VOTES NOW ONLINE BY DECEMBER 31, 2023.**

THE VOICE OF THE INDEPENDENT RETAILER

# SHOOTING SPORTS RETAILER

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*Shooting Sports Retailer* is the most respected and one of the longest-standing B2B brands in the shooting sports retail market, with well over four decades in the industry. We're standing proudly with our history as we look forward to our second annual SSR Choice Awards. We want you, our readers, to speak up and share your thoughts on the best brands in the industry today. Let us know what brands you think deserve the recognition and we will honor the Gold, Silver and Bronze award winners. Help us increase visibility and show our appreciation for the best the industry has to offer.

# OFFICIAL BALLOT

	BRAND	MODEL
<b>FIREARMS</b>		
Bolt-Action Rifle		
Modern Sporting Rifle		
Lever Action		
Shotgun		
Muzzleloader		
Handgun		
Revolvers		
AR Pistol		
Airgun		
Crossbow		
<b>AMMUNITION</b>		
Shotshells		
Centerfire		
Rimfire		
Hunting Pellet		
<b>RELOADING</b>		
Bullets		
Components		
Powder		
<b>AFTERMARKET TRIGGER</b>		
<b>AFTERMARKET BARREL</b>		
<b>GUN SIGHT</b>		
Riflescope		
Red Dot/Reflex Sight		
Night Vision/Thermal		
Laser Sight		
<b>HUNTING LIGHTS</b>		
Gun-Mounted Light		
Hand-Held Light		

	BRAND	MODEL
<b>BINOCULAR</b>		
<b>RANGEFINDER</b>		
<b>SPOTTING SCOPE</b>		
<b>SUPPRESSOR</b>		
<b>SHOTGUN CHOKE TUBE</b>		
<b>HOLSTERS</b>		
<b>SHOOTING STICKS</b>		
<b>SHOOTING BENCH</b>		
<b>SHOOTING TARGET</b>		
<b>GUN CLEANING PRODUCTS</b>		
<b>GUN CASE</b>		
<b>GUN SAFE</b>		
<b>GUN-MOUNTED BIPODS</b>		
<b>BOOTS</b>		
<b>VEST/BACKPACK</b>		
<b>TRAIL CAMERA</b>		
<b>CELLULAR TRAIL CAMERA</b>		
<b>GPS</b>		
<b>HUNTING APP</b>		
<b>KNIFE</b>		
<b>CAMO PATTERN</b>		
<b>APPAREL</b>		
<b>FAVORITE DISTRIBUTOR</b>		

**NEW PRODUCT** (Introduced in 2023) \_\_\_\_\_

**FAVORITE SSR ARTICLE/DEPARTMENT** \_\_\_\_\_

**FAVORITE SSR WRITER** \_\_\_\_\_

**DID WE MISS ANY IMPORTANT CATEGORIES THAT SHOULD APPEAR IN NEXT YEAR'S CHOICE AWARDS?**  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**SUBMIT YOUR VOTES NOW ONLINE BY DECEMBER 31, 2023.**



Photo: InfilRay Outdoor

# High on the HOGS

This niche market offers many merchandising opportunities.

BY KEVIN TATE

Populations of wild pigs in every shape, size and color are quickly on the rise across the country. While the pork presents problems for agriculture, natural resource management and much more, it's creating year-round opportunities for hunting enthusiasts and for the retailers who cater to them.

**W**ild pigs are opportunistic omnivores. They're hardy, effectively have no predators other than man, reproduce quickly and wreak havoc on any habitat they occupy. Officials with the Mississippi State University Extension Service say a permanent solution that gets rid of wild hogs anywhere once and for all is unlikely ever to be found. While strategic trapping is the method most likely to affect steady population control, there will always be a place for hunting where hogs are a concern.

Hog hunting is a specialized pursuit. While some pieces of gear can be carried over from duck season, deer season and other game goals large and small, a fair amount of it will probably be used nowhere but in pursuit of pigs. Since wild pigs are an invasive species and can be hunted throughout the year, and because their range continues to see rapid growth with no end in sight, it's reasonable to expect the market for gear specialized to their pursuit to enjoy steady, rapid growth as well.

Key categories filling the wish list of every serious hog hunter include:

- Specialized headlamps
- Thermal monoculars
- Thermal or night-vision riflescopes
- Dark-colored clothing
- Quality footwear
- Shooting sticks
- Enhanced hearing protection
- Automatic rifles
- Suppressors
- Illuminators for tracking

Let's explore each of those one at a time.



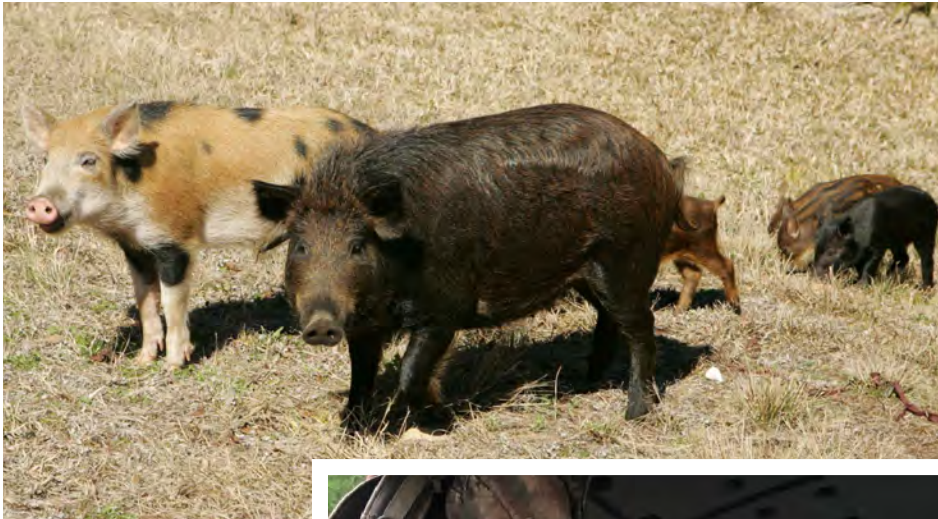


### OH SAY, CAN YOU SEE?

Wild pigs are most active at night. When they're to be hunted over bait, through spot-and-stalk methods or some combination of the two, most of the work is going to be done after dark. We'll get to what hunters want for seeing game in a moment. To see everything else, including where they're putting their feet, how they're using their hands, what's coming up in the trail and more, they'll want

a hands-free headlamp — but not just any bright light will do. Regular white or full-spectrum light will blow out every pig in the neighborhood, but high-intensity red and green lights don't seem to bother them. Hog hunters will want to use a headlamp in red or green for seeing all the little everyday things that go along with any hunt.

A bright white light will be necessary for blood trailing. For everything leading up to that eventuality, red or green is the way they'll want to go. Make sure to stock quality headlamps that are capable of all three, as well as ample spare batteries to boot.



← Hog populations are out of control across most of the animals' range. Since most states have no closed season, hog hunters are a year-round selling opportunity.



### CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?

Hunters who will be working in groups will benefit greatly from enhanced hearing protection. Earmuffs designed to dampen the sharp report of a rifle but amplify and enhance vocal instructions between team members are a great addition to any hunting group.

← Suppressors are wildly popular. If you haven't gone Class III, now's the perfect time.





**YOU'RE GETTING WARMER**

As hunters are scanning fields or approaching a bait site, they'll be taking extra care not to spook any pigs that are there or that are coming or going from the place the hunter expects them to be. This is where a thermal monocular is ideal. A thermal monocular will provide a one-eyed view of the surroundings much more effectively than a light of any color. This is a hand-held device used to scan the area for game, much as binoculars in daylight would be.

**RED, WHITE AND GLOW**

Serious hog hunters, in states where nighttime hunting is legal, will make a quality night-vision or thermal scope for their rifle their top investment. There's no doubt this is any hunter's single largest step, both in expense and in technology. Its performance is akin to that delivered by the current top-shelf fish-finding technology for bass anglers: Once someone has seen what the technology can do, they'll feel like they're wasting time and opportunities every day afterward that they're doing without. A thermal scope, especially, is technology that changes the game.

Remind your customers of the necessity to adhere to identification ranges when they're using thermal and night-vision optics. Using a firearm in the dark adds several measures of responsibility



Photo: Infray Outdoor

and accountability to each ethical hunter's kit. Thermal and night-vision gear works differently from standard riflescopes. The reliability of the images they create is distance-dependent. As always, every hunter is responsible for identifying their target and what is beyond. Wild pigs often invade land used by domestic livestock, and it's important to be absolutely certain which a hunter sees before they pull the trigger.

↑ Night-vision and thermal optics are better (and more affordable) than ever, and many nighttime hunters will be looking for the advantage they offer.

**DOING IT IN THE DARK**

Clothing colors and camouflage aren't critical per se, so long as the clothing your customers wear is dark. White and other light colors can appear almost luminescent in the light of a harvest moon. It can be bright enough to impact hunter success. That said, tough, durable clothing built to withstand tangles with briars and the occasional bit of barbed wire is a bonus.

**FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS**

Good quality footwear is a must. Since hunters are walking in the dark, they're much more likely to encounter wet or awkward footing than they would while covering the same ground by day. Sturdy, waterproof boots that offer good ankle support and excellent traction will prove their worth for your customers.

***“Remind your customers of the necessity to adhere to identification ranges when they’re using thermal and night-vision optics. Using a firearm in the dark adds several measures of responsibility and accountability to each ethical hunter’s kit.”***





### STEADY AS YOU GO

Shots on game typically occur after hunters have walked long distances across uneven terrain, tense with anticipation and vibrating with adrenaline. The ability to fire one well-aimed shot, then quickly choose other targets and send accurate follow-up rounds, is strongly dependent upon having a good rest from which to fire. The ability to do this well comes from lots of practice at the range, and it involves each hunter's tripod, bipod or monopod of choice.



↑ Dark clothes (not necessarily camo) and good boots are important to nighttime hog hunters. A variety of rifles will do the job nicely, but there are a few key calibers hog specialists will be looking for.

The art of shooting a rifle from a standing position is one that has to be intentionally learned. Having and using a good set of shooting sticks is as elemental to that as the rifle and ammunition. Good shooting sticks are those that can be easily carried in the extended, ready-to-use position. They should be somewhat resilient to bends and strains, considering they're sure to encounter both when being carried and used in the dark. They should be sturdy and light weight. Most of all, telescoping versions should absolutely lock into place so they don't collapse in the heat of the moment.

### THIS IS MY RIFLE

Hog hunting done right leads quickly to target-rich environments. As hog populations continue to expand, this only becomes more pronounced. A bolt-action rifle ideal for deer or elk hunting will work. To truly take best advantage of situations a hunter's hard work will produce, a semi-automatic model is best. Hog hunting is where the modern sporting rifle best shines. Consider a selection of the following for inclusion in your firearm department:



### PLATFORM: AR-10

Calibers: .308, 6.5 Creedmore, .338 Federal

### PLATFORM: AR-15

Calibers: 6.5 Grendel, 6.8 SPC, 6mm ARC, .300 AAC Blackout, .300 HAM'R

### SUPPRESSION IS GOLDEN

A suppressor makes for a great addition to any hog-hunting rifle. The use of a suppressor will make the shooting experience more enjoyable by reducing recoil and report. Depending upon the situation, a suppressor can lead to more successful follow-up shots where multiple hogs are present.

### ILLUMINATION IN THE FLATWOODS

Once a hog is shot and the hunter takes up the trail, they'll want something to mark each bit of sign along the way. Remember, they're doing this in the dark. Every drop of blood will have to be found with care and a flashlight, so they'll want to keep it found once they find it. Illuminated nocks on arrows are ideal for bowhunters, and reflective tacks or tape, the same kind used for marking a path from a trail to a deer stand are handy for anyone. Stocking these low-price-point items will help demonstrate how serious you are about helping your customers succeed. They may not cost much, but having them on hand will show patrons you've considered their needs with care. **HR**





# Small-Game Gear Goes Big Time

Your customers who chase squirrels, upland birds and bunnies deep into Eastern woods and far into Western public land are stepping up to better gear.

BY JEFF BLAKE

Small-game and upland-bird hunters know better than anyone that their gear has to function and be durable. Duck hunters sit in a blind, and deer hunters plant themselves in treestands. Not big-time small-game hunters. Those who pursue things that hide in clumps of grass and brush piles and scurry from tree to tree need to stay on the move and push through whatever briars, rimrock and creekbottom that stands in the way of a brace of birds, bunnies, or a squirrel-filled Brunswick stew.







**GUNNER**  
YETI

**UPL**  
NDL

STRAN

GO FAST





Their clothes don't simply cover their bodies or just keep them warm. Their apparel is their gear. It will be part of their success or failure. Have you ever willed your way through a wrap of briars in mere blue jeans? Then you know you weren't at your best when that bird flushed or the rabbit came around the corner in front of the beagles. Ever marched behind mountain curs for three miles in boots that were warm but didn't fit just right? Then climbing a steep hill for a shot a young-of-the-year fox squirrel probably wasn't a top priority.

Better gear makes a better hunters, and that's especially true for your small-game and upland-bird customers.

So what exactly are they looking for? First off, believe it or not, style.

"Any guy 40 years old or under is not going to want to go out to a bar afterwards with dorky brush pants made for overweight old guys," said Matt Hardinge, an upland bird nut



from central Oregon. "It's just a bad look. You might as well look stylin' and have effective gear."

Hardinge said he's shifted from denim-type cotton that chafes and away from heavy chaps toward prod-

ucts that are more expensive but that can be worn in the lava fields behind your pointer or at a microbrewery in a hometown like his (Bend, Oregon).

People his age want gear they can wear on a hike or concert as well as for hard-core hunting. There are a lot of new brands that are cooler than Columbia, NorthFace and Patagonia, he said.

Hardinge said clothing brands like Stone Glacier and other pants take thermoregulation seriously. Hardinge noted that merino wool pants are way more comfortable but much less durable.

"I hunt in all kinds of brush, and even in Arizona or when hunting pheasant in cattails, I won't wear traditional brush pants," he said.

← Travis Warren is what you might call an extreme upland-bird hunter. The Upchukar podcast host does not walk cornfields or longleaf pine savannahs but near-vertical valleys and among volcanic rock where chukars thrive. His gear can't hold him back.

↑ Matt Hardinge says the next generation of small-game hunters want to blaze their own trail and are bringing a new attitude and style to the sport.

"They never fit right, and they look ridiculous. I don't want to look like Elmer Fudd."

His base layer and socks are merino. His vest is fleece, and he'll carry a waterproof shell. That's it for all but the coldest weather. After all, he's on the move.

When it comes to boots, it's not your typical small-game kicks. He goes for high-quality sheep-hunter or elk-hunter-style boots. The soles will be much stiffer than say a Danner Gila or Irish Setter VaprTrek, but they'll last several seasons of walking volcanic rock and steep slopes where he hunts chukar and mountain quail. After all, he's not weekend warrior. He chases birds 100 days a year.

Lately, he's springing for White's Boots, Lathrope or Sones, which are all gaining popularity in his neck of the woods. They are more expensive,





## Trending Accessories



### DOG E-COLLARS

Garmin is integrating dog e-collars with their popular watches. Oregon's Matt Hardinge pairs his Alpha 200i with his Garmin Instinct watch. When the dog's on point, he gets a beep and then can glance at his watching that gives him the direction to walk to catch up with the pup. It also inReach sat phone capabilities that give him peace of mind when he is way off the beaten path 20 miles down a two-track.



### TRUCK ACCESSORIES

In case he does get stuck, Hardinge has just about everything he needs to suddenly bunk up and survive in truck-deck drawers that slide out and lock. They also keep his hunt gear, like guns, shells, dog stuff neatly organized as well. Hardinge works for Decked drawer systems, and his Ram Power Wagon is decked out for sure. By the way, if you were wondering, these systems will hold up 2,000 pounds of cargo on top of them, so you're not sacrificing your bed for other stuff. Yes, you can still help your friend move, if you're not hunting that day.



### YETI YONDER

YETI water bottles are heavy, or at least they once were. Now they're making one called the Yonder that is super light in two sizes, 1 liter or 750 ml. There's nothing flashy about them, but they're practical and will fill a niche for hunters. While YETI products are usually costly, these retail for \$25-\$28.



### MINIMALIST BIRD BELT

The Tom Beckbe Quail Belt can carry all kinds of small game but is truly proper for Gentleman Bob. The belt and three pouches hold shells on the sides and game in the back. Remove the game pouch, and it's ready for sporting clays. For longer treks, their strap vest is a perennial favorite for bird hunters.



like \$300-\$400 for a pair, but worth it, he says, to have the right gear for the field and wherever else you're going. Hardinge and his friends hunt hard and play hard.

**HOLLER BACK**

If you head due east, you'll get into a whole different area of the country where the small game is more likely to have teeth rather than feathers.



↑ Kevin Murphy's gear is technical as a mountain-climbers', with merino wool and the latest thermoregulation jackets and pants. But you can't talk him into using anything other than his Remington 870.

In the rolling hills and mountains of Kentucky, you'll find Kevin Murphy and his dogs chasing down rabbits and chasing squirrels up trees. Murphy, who is a bit older than Hardinge but not quite a Boomer, also opts for the lighter, more technical gear.

"As a kid, we wore Army surplus," said Murphy. "It's a wonder we didn't die in it. It's amazing what we have now that keeps us out longer and more comfortably."

Murphy is also a merino fan. He wears wool base layers, as well as

pants, shirts and socks. It's taken over his dresser drawers because they are warm even when wet, and they're not scratchy. The Smart Wool brand is popular for its socks and base layers.

But in Kentucky, Murph will hunt areas choked with briars. While he prefers a pair of wool pants, he'll break out traditional heavy briar pants and even chaps if he has to. Yes, he'll look like Elmer Fudd (especially with his Jones-style cap), but if you've ever hunted bunnies out East, you know they're worth it.

All this brings back memories of hunting rabbits with my father on the East Coast farms. We didn't have beagles, and our pointer had no interest in cottontails. Dad would point to the thickest green briars, where the rabbits were, and say, "If you want to shoot 'em, you have to go get 'em." I'd push through the thorns and end up with red stripes across my legs that would burn in the shower at home. When I got a little older,

**Dog Horn**

Well, actually, this isn't trending as far as we can tell, and it's anything but high-tech. But we all know small-game hunters carry on a tradition, and Murphy carries something on him that goes way back.

"I always have an old cow horn with the tip cut off like old fox hunters of Kentucky," said Murphy. He toots on the horn at the beginning of the hunt, and the dogs come in. He'll blow it again when he's the horse or headed to the woods.

"Everyone knows then that we'd going hunting," he said. "And batteries never die."



↑ The trend in small-game hunting and boots is moving toward high-quality sheep-hunter or elk-hunter-style boots with rands and top-end soles instead of rubber and neoprene.

I bought myself a pair of L.L. Bean brush pants, and I felt like I could walk anywhere.

Murphy appreciates a good pair of brush pants now and again. Regarding boots, he is traditionalist and opts for an uninsulated hunting boot with leather uppers and rubber lowers. If he's got a long slog, maybe following coon dogs all night, he'll pull on a pair of Danner Pronghorn or something waterproof but breathable. Is a swamp run planned? Then he'll go for a pair of LaCrosse's Big Burlys or Xtratufs — not great for long distance hikes, but excellent when you'll be doing a lot of splashing. Or, if he's expecting a nasty swamp-briar combo, then he steps into the heavyweights: a pair of chaps with attached rubber boot, like a the heavy-duty Dryshod Knee Hi Boots with Yoder Chaps.

"It can get hot in the chaps with boots, but it's worth it when you have to push through the thick stuff and then water through the muck. With these, I can go just about anywhere," said Murphy.

And that's where Murphy finds the big bunnies: in the darkest, dankest swamps of northern Kentucky.

While he is a traditionalist, he's also a minimalist. When it comes to upland birds that he hunts in nearby Illinois or Kansas, Murphy takes just a strap vest with few pockets but room for water, shells and a big game pocket for his dead critters.

"If it's nippy, and the wind is blowing, I'll have a protective shell outerwear jacket, one that is briar-proof and rain-proof, and that's about it," Murph said.

Filson and Tom Beckbe make classic strap-vests that are proven to give years of wear. Becke also has a Quail Belt that is truly minimalist and is a great alternative to a vest or brush jacket. Basically, it's a classic three-pouch hunting belt, with two shell pockets on either side and a handy large game pocket in the rear on a leather belt. Interestingly, they recently changed their classic design so that it unbuckles in both the front and back, which lets you change the overall length while keeping both of the side shell pockets on the side of your hips. No more awkward adjusting and spilling your shells.

I wonder how many gray squirrels Murph could stuff in those pockets? **HR**





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	BRAND	MODEL
<b>FIREARMS</b>		
Bolt-Action Rifle		
Modern Sporting Rifle		
Shotgun		
AR Pistol		
Handgun		
<b>AMMUNITION</b>		
Shotshells		
Centerfire		
Rimfire		
<b>RELOADING</b>		
Bullets		
Components		
Powder		
<b>AFTERMARKET TRIGGER</b>		
<b>AFTERMARKET BARREL</b>		
<b>GUN SIGHT</b>		
Riflescope		
Red Dot/Reflex Sight		
Night Vision/Thermal		
Laser Sight		
<b>HUNTING LIGHTS</b>		
Gun-Mounted Light		
Hand-Held Light		

	BRAND	MODEL
<b>BINOCULAR</b>		
<b>RANGEFINDER</b>		
<b>SPOTTING SCOPE</b>		
<b>SUPPRESSOR</b>		
<b>SHOTGUN CHOKE TUBE</b>		
<b>SHOOTING STICKS</b>		
<b>SHOOTING BENCH</b>		
<b>SHOOTING TARGET</b>		
<b>GUN CLEANING PRODUCTS</b>		
<b>GUN CASE</b>		
<b>GUN SAFE</b>		
<b>GUN-MOUNTED BIPODS</b>		
<b>KNIFE</b>		
<b>BOOTS</b>		
<b>APPAREL</b>		
<b>NEW PRODUCT</b> (Introduced in 2023) _____		
<b>FAVORITE DISTRIBUTOR</b> _____		
<b>FAVORITE TACTICAL RETAILER</b> <b>ARTICLE/DEPARTMENT</b> _____		
<b>FAVORITE TR WRITER</b> _____		
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# Handguns

## You Don't Want

### To Fire

They cost a lot, sting in recoil and defy IWB carry. But hunters want to pack 'em. Here's why.

BY WAYNE VAN ZWOLL

**T**oday's handgun market is awash with concealable versions of striker-fire autos. Full-size 1911s and revolvers have eye appeal, but the best are expensive. They hold fewer rounds and can be harder for a novice or a person with small hands to shoot accurately. Most kick harder and weigh more than shooters — especially new gun-owners — want in a pistol for waistband or bed-stand.

Manufacturers are as pleased as retailers. Multiple-axis CNC machines can quickly carve metal parts for striker-fired autos. Polymer works for components that were once chewed from steel. Assembly is easy because these pistols were designed to come apart and go back together on garage benches.





Still, full-size autos in .40, 10mm and .45 ACP, and revolvers in .357, .41 and .44 Magnum, offer more than historical heft and the feel of “real guns.” They’re useful as back-up in bear country.

On August 12, 1977, helicopter pilot Ed Spencer set his chopper down on an Alaskan ridge to let Cynthia Dusel-Bacon off for her day’s work as a U.S.G.S geologist. Soon thereafter, on the trail, Cynthia spotted a bear as it rose from nearby brush. She yelled and waved her arms. The bear stared back. Cynthia had no firearm. When the animal disappeared, she moved above the trail. Suddenly the bear leaped from nowhere and struck her down. She willed herself to remain still as it bit into her right shoulder and shook her. When she reached for the radio in her backpack, the bear shredded her arm. Then she heard its teeth “crunching on my skull.” As the animal pulled her into the brush, her pack ripped, exposing the radio. She managed to key it. “Ed! Come quick!” she screamed. “I’m being eaten by a bear!”

Relayed from camp 80 miles off, that call was Cynthia’s salvation. But she would lose both arms in surgery. The bear believed to have mauled Cynthia was shot. It was not a giant grizzly but a 175-pound black bear. Studies have tallied as many attacks from black bears as from grizzlies.

Any bear attack is a rare event. Usually the person surprises the animal or is perceived as a threat to cubs or to a carcass the bear claims. The beast that maimed Cynthia evidently saw her as prey.

Avoiding bears is a good idea. Running from a bear is not, as it can trigger a predatory response, and bears sprint at 40 mph. Playing dead, you’re no longer a threat, but if you were targeted as prey, you become dinner.



For decades, outfitter Ron Dube hosted hunters where grizzlies abound. He never shot a bear. “I left them alone. Confronted, I didn’t show fear,” he said. “When a grizzly followed its nose to camp supper, I stood, yelled and waved him off. Once a client and I came upon a big griz on a carcass. Unaware of us, it paced about, growling, bristling, asserting ownership. A dangerous bear.



↑ Considered a potent revolver round in blackpowder days, the .44-40 has since been upstaged by new rounds.



↑ Several 1911s (here a Springfield) have been offered in 10mm, arguably the best pick for a back-up auto.

We left quietly, right away.”

Bear spray, well directed, can stop an aggressive bear. But I find a spray can be awkward to aim and not as quick to deploy as a handgun. Speed often matters — though hitting the bear with a bullet may not. In Wyoming wilderness, a guide from a camp I shared barely had time to fire his .357 in front of a bear that charged his clients from behind.

← Alaska guide Morris Talifson shot this 11-foot brown bear in ‘49. Not all big bears are hostile.

The sow dashed past the men on one side, her half-grown cub on the other. That week, a Montana guide was killed by a grizzly that came fast as he was field-dressing an elk. The report indicated his pistol was not within easy reach. He had no chance to fire it.

### SELLING PROTECTION

If you peddle firearms, you know sales come easier when customers have use in mind. But “use” may not mean frequent firing. As with handguns bought for home protection, a pistol for field carry in bear country may see little action beyond a zero check. Indeed, because it kicks harder and is more costly to fire than a 9mm, a pistol with the muscle to turn a bear may be shot

### The Caveat

Handgun carry is often discouraged in bear country, and in some places forbidden, lest people fire on bears that pose no imminent threat. False charges are tough to tell from the real thing, and bear spray may well turn a bear. The pistol imposes a decision: Given time for one aimed bullet, should it go into the ground or a legally protected animal?

Because handguns aren’t allowed everywhere, stocking bear spray is a good idea for any retailers located in bear country. You’ll be able to sell it to hunters as well as to hikers and campers who come to your store to stock up for a weekend in the woods.







rarely. Unlike bear spray, however, a handgun is something to admire, a pleasure to carry even if it's never needed. That's why people who hunt with rifles bring big pistols along and why enthusiasts own several 1911s or big-bore revolvers.

Given the current stamped to striker-fired autos, a gun store can easily commit its annual budget to small, angular look-alikes. But a powerful pistol in the display case instantly draws the eye.

A classic bear-country backup is



↑ Freedom Arms makes superb SA revolvers, here in the stout .500 Wyoming Express. Of course, they're heavy.

↑ This Ruger Super Redhawk is a fine hunting handgun, but too heavy, in the author's opinion, as a back-up.

S&W's Model 29 revolver. Alaska's guides hailed it soon after the .44 Magnum's 1956 debut, long before Eastwood became Dirty Harry. But a brown bear outfitter told me this tale: "One bear solidly hit by a rifle bullet struggled into alders. The client declined to follow, so I took .44 in hand. A few steps on, a wall of bear rose up in my face. The beast flattened me. I emptied all six into him as he ran me over, wanting out. My shots had no visible effect. He expired shortly, probably from the rifle wound. No pistol has the punch to reliably stop a big bear unless the bullet destroys brain or spine. In the lightning-quick fury of a charge, such hits are hard to make."

There are frothier rounds than the .44 Magnum. S&W offers X-Frame DA revolvers in .460 and .500 S&W. But these weigh 72 ounces, twice as much as an L-Frame .357 or a mid-weight 1911. Freedom Arms lists its exquisite SA Model 83 in .454 Casull and .500 Wyoming Express. At 53 ounces, this too is a hunting handgun. A backup for all-day carry shouldn't exceed, say, 40 ounces with a 4- or 5-inch barrel. All-steel 1911s



### Sample ballistics for bear-country backup cartridges for handguns to 40 ounces.

Cartridge, bullet weight (grains) and type	muzzle V/E (fps/ft./lbs.)	50-yard V/E (fps/ft./lbs.)
.357 Magnum Speer 125 HST.....	1,360/513	1,200/400
.357 Magnum Hornady 135 FlexLock.....	1,275/487	1,150/396
.357 Magnum Winchester 158 JSP.....	1,235/535	1,104/428
.357 Magnum Federal 180 Swift A-Frame.....	1,130/510	1,050/440
.357 Magnum Remington 180 SJHP.....	1,145/524	1,052/443
.357 Magnum Cor-Bon 200 Hard Cast.....	1,150/587	1,049/489
.40 S&W, Remington 155 JHP.....	1,205/499	1,095/413
.40 S&W, MagTech 160 SLWC.....	1,165/484	1,059/398
.40 S&W, Remington 165 Bonded Brass JHP.....	1,150/484	1,040/396
.40 S&W, Speer 165 Gold Dot JHP.....	1,150/485	1,043/399
.40 S&W, Hornady 175 FlexLock.....	1,010/396	948/350
.40 S&W, Speer 180 HST.....	1,010/408	954/364
10mm, Hornady 155 XTP.....	1,410/684	1,224/516
10mm, Hornady 175 FlexLock.....	1,160/523	1,061/437
10mm, Hornady 180 XTP.....	1,275/650	1,146/525
10mm, Federal 180 Trophy Bonded.....	1,275/650	1,123/504
10mm, Federal 200 HST.....	1,130/567	991/436
10mm, Federal 200 Fusion.....	1,200/639	1,102/539
.45 ACP+P, Remington 185 BrassJHP.....	1,140/534	1,042/446
.45 ACP+P, Hornady 200 XTP JHP.....	1,055/494	982/428
.45 ACP+P, Speer 200 Gold Dot JHP.....	1,080/518	994/439
.45 ACP+P, Hornady 220 FlexLock.....	975/464	927/420
.45 ACP+P, Black Hills 230 JHP.....	950/460	903/418
.45 ACP+P, Federal 230 HST.....	950/461	909/422



qualify. S&W N-Frame .357, .41 and .44 Magnums don't!

Autoloaders get more punch with the 10mm than with the .45 ACP. Introduced in the Bren Ten pistol in 1983, the 10mm is regaining traction it once lost to the .40 S&W. SIG offers it in its 220. Dan Wesson, Kimber, Ruger and Springfield Armory chamber 1911s for it. It's even showing up in revolvers: S&W's 42-ounce Model 610 and Ruger's 38-ounce GP-100. Federal's 180-grain Trophy Bonded bullet at 1,275 fps carries 650 ft./lbs. Just as lethal: Hornady's 180-grain XTP and Winchester's 180-grain Defender loads.

Among 10mms, Springfield's XD-M Elite stands apart, a striker-fired auto with 3¾-inch barrel.



↑ (Left photo) This Springfield XD-M rides high, canted forward in a classy 1791 OWB holster that hugs the waist. (Right photo) Falco makes a beautiful chest holster, here positioned below "binocular level." Fast, easy access!



It weighs 28½ ounces with a Hex Firefly red-dot sight. So equipped, it lists for less than \$850.

How would this polymer-frame auto compare with a 10mm 1911 or a powerful DA revolver in a bear crisis? Its 11-shot magazine has an edge. That double stack makes the grip easy to hold and comfy in recoil. Ambidextrous controls are a plus. And the

↑ This Model 57 S&W in .41 Magnum has plenty of power and accuracy. It weighs about 45 ounces.

XD-M Elite weighs a half-pound less than a steel 1911.

My 10mm XD-M cycles without fault. Its balance puts it naturally on target. The Hex Dragonfly red-dot

sight, a treat for aging eyes, hunkers low for fast aim. Trigger pull is a consistent 5¼ pounds. Out of the box from 25 yards, four of five bullets stayed inside 1.4 inches. Of course, I nudged the last an inch farther out! Recoil? About like a .45's.

Whatever the backup pistol, fast, sure handling upstages the measure of 25-yard groups.

## FIELD CARRY

Where a pistol rides and how efficiently it can be drawn can decide the outcome of a bear encounter.

Unlike a hunting gun, in hand or secured until drawn for a carefully considered shot, a backup gun must come to palm instantly from any body position, maybe during a scramble over deadfall, as a bear delivers a haymaker or when going fetal suddenly makes sense! Until then, it must be shielded from weather and stay with you.

Because holsters are important, a selection belongs wherever handguns are sold. Without a suitable holster, many pistols go home in a box, so peddling holsters can be profitable even without gun sales. List prices for production-line Kydex and leather holsters and rigs range, roughly, from \$40 to \$300. Stocking for popular pistols, with an easy-order scheme for others, you can serve any customer.

I like leather. As a wildlife agent, I once carried my S&W 66 in a Milt Sparks hip holster. Now it rides in Galco's Combat Master, which better secures it. Both holsters give the revolver a butt-forward cant. My hand catches it naturally in a firing grip.

A 1791 OWB hip holster cradles my Springfield Armory XD-M 10mm Elite. Of heavy steer-hide and beautifully contoured, it's slotted for the beefiest belts and shaped to hug the waist. It puts the trigger 1¼ inches above belt-line, grip raked forward. My Firefly red-dot sight clears the holster mouth; my big-knuckled fingers have room to get a firing grip.

Trail miles remind me when my belt suspends a pistol heavier than 30 ounces, and hunting coats that overhang a belt holster impede a hip draw, especially if you're on the ground. For 1911s and big-bore revolvers, I prefer a chest carry. It distributes a pistol's weight where







↑ These trim Custom Shop S&W .357s would get high marks as back-ups from revolver enthusiasts.

my body best bears up under backpacks many times heavier! Also, if a bear is too near or spotted too late to risk immediate exit, easing my hand slowly to a chest holster imparts less change in my body's profile and less charge-inducing motion than lifting a coat to draw from a belt or shoulder holster. Want to pull off a mitten? Your teeth are inches above the pistol. A bear with mayhem in mind requires no delay. Most coats are easy to open from the top. A chest holster is accessible when they're just partly undone. If you're late and batted to earth, your hands naturally come chest-ward to shield vitals.

For full-size backup pistols, Galco's Great Alaskan chest holster is my favorite chest rig. It has a flexible, lightweight harness properly broad across the shoulder, with a pinch-release polymer snap on a nylon torso tag. Closely and precisely stitched, the holster leather is stiff and molded to fit specific guns. A leather retention strap with a snap allows cocked-and-locked carry. The Great Alaskan chest holster is available for pistols and revolvers, with matching pouches for magazines and loose ammo.

Galco offers many styles of leather holsters, hand-molded to fit myriad revolvers and autos. Most of my holsters are Galcos. Oddly enough, a Slovakian gun-leather firm goes by the name Falco. The Falco chest rig I've used is finely crafted. It

fits my 1911 like the proverbial glove. Falco takes custom orders and responded promptly to mine.

Not everyone prefers leather. Sweat makes it smell bad. Acids and moisture in leather cause rust on pistol steel. Petroleum oils deter rust but weaken leather over time. So Galco and other holster-makers use Kydex, too. It's durable and economical. It

can be closely fitted to specific pistols and won't mar them. Some shooters like the in-and-out "click" of high-quality Kydex holsters.

Selling either handgun or holster as mere insurance, you sell it short. Unlike bear spray, both have value beyond utility. They please customers before and after travels where bears live! **HR**

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# THE HOTTEST DEER CALLS AND SCENTS FOR 2023

The best deer-hunting calls and scents help hunters feel more comfortable in the woods and can attract bucks and does within range. Here's what to sell this year.

BY ALAN CLEMONS

**W**hitetail hunters don't all buy their calls, scents and gear before the season begins and then never need anything else. They spill bottles of scent or forget one in the woods. They run out of wicks or dispensers. A call might drop out of a backpack and get lost. They will need more calls and scents, among other things, during the hunting season.

Bowhunters and gun hunters may use different products. Scents that work during the early season aren't optimal for late season. Ditto for calls, too. An aggressive buck grunt to lure a wily but angry whitetail staking his claim to an area may be worthless a couple of months later. Putting out certain buck or doe scents in different parts of the season might be a home run or strikeout.

Knowing what's hot and when to promote it before and during whitetail deer seasons is critical to making sales. Whitetail deer hunting help drive the industry's financial train. If it's not the locomotive, it's the coal engine being fueled year-round by everything from buck grunts to game cameras. Scents and calls are a big part of that puzzle. Here are some pieces to help make things fit this year.



## CALLS REALLY WORK

One of the most consistent topics I've ever seen on hunting sites is, "Do calls really work?" Second on the list probably would be about rattling, which few in the Southeast believe works outside of Texas and the Midwest. Third probably would be about scents. Let's discuss calls for now.

Whitetail deer calls aren't like waterfowl or turkey calls in that unless you're looking at a buck or doe, hunters may not know or believe they work. I can see a duck or turkey call work. The bird responds, either by coming to my blind or gobbling (or flying away, since my calling is lousy). With whitetail deer, though, you don't know if a grunt call or rattling antlers work until a buck shows up. He may come in hot, looking for a fight, or be wary and stay away, scanning to see who's in his territory.

Calls work, though, and that's a fact. Deer respond. Hunters who don't believe this probably have given up in frustration, didn't call enough or expected a buck to come storming in like William Wallace in Braveheart looking for a scrap. Your job is to reinforce that calls work, and it may take time. A solid grunt call always is a good option to have in a hunting pack and one few hunters leave at home, even if they're unsure about using it. Those who ask good



questions of veteran hunters and do their research, along with practice, can get it done.

Possibilities for you to consider stocking are the Primos Rut Roar Grunt Call, Dialect Deer Grunt from Rocky Mountain Hunting Calls, and the Brawler Buck from Quaker Boy. One of the all-time classics that still gets knowing nods from older hunters is the Hunter Specialties True Talker. For whatever reason, it went away for a while but now is back as the True Talker OG. It produces sounds of a mature buck, young buck, doe and fawn. How? With a special, new reed and bellows tube; the call has a rubber coating and won't freeze in cold weather. Woodhaven Game Calls in Alabama makes The Intimidator, which should get bucks fired up to fight or arouse their curiosity later in the season when unbred does are cycling through a second rut period.

Fawn bleats also are top possibilities for your shelves. Fawns flitter around and sometimes, occasionally, get away from the doe or siblings. Waaaaahhhhhh! Waaaaahhhhhh! A bleat or two can get a curious, protective doe coming in hot to find the wayward fawn, no matter whose it is. Some hunters may have had a boring day and want some action, so they hit the fawn bleat in hopes of smoking a coyote. Doe bleats also are good to have, as does are communicative yet also a bit territorial. The matriarch might want to find out what's going on with a doe hollering in the area.

The Can from Primos, a flip-over bellows-style call that makes doe and fawn bleats, is a longtime favorite. It's incredibly easy to use, too. You have options for The Original, the Long Can (longer sounds), the Lil' Can (shorter bleats) and the Great Big Can (louder). Pick and choose

at your desire, but The Original has been around for more than two decades for a reason. Another good one to consider is The Closer from Woodhaven, along with the Adult Doe Estrous Bleat from Hunter Specialties.



Promote your calls during the season, and not just before it starts during your big Whitetail Weekend. (You have one of those, right? If not, plan one now.) Put calls to the fore during the season as conditions change — from early buck fighting to separation, pre- and peak-rut times, and then post-rut late-season seeking. Hunters may come in for something else, or they need a new call, or they're down on their luck looking for that One Big Thing that could help them tag out. If your calls are collecting dust in a boring corner, you're missing sales.

**DON'T FORGET THE SCENTS**

While calls can be rotated around, and should be, scents definitely must be top of mind for you and your staff during the whitetail season. What works on opening day may be a complete turnoff two months later when temperatures are colder, does



now, thanks to CWD), pre-rut scents, peak- and post-rut, gels, sprays, drippers, misters, foggers, pellets that dissolve ... your options are almost limitless. Hunters will be seeking these products before the season and, if they're smart, during it as well. Be prepared for the entire season and highlight your products well.

Scents are incredibly easy to use today thanks to several great products. One is the Key Wick from Wildlife Research Center in Wisconsin. Scents are all they do; they're not into 23 other product categories like a burger stand trying to lure salad-eaters. It's just scents and related products. Key Wicks are easy to hang on tree limbs, and then you can insert the wick into the bottle of urine or scent. No muss, no fuss. I've used these for years and love them. They're great in front of

are hot to trot and bucks are getting hit with 1-2 punches and uppercuts by aromas making their hormones go haywire.

Scents are the cologne and perfume of the hunting world. Buck urine, doe estrus, gland lures, synthetic or real (mostly the former,







cameras, too.

Another great seller for you should be scent drags. They're available from Code Blue, Hunters Specialties, Tink's and others. Wildlife Research has a Pro Drag combo that comes with Trail's End scent; hunters tie a cord or line to the Pro Drag, dip it in the scent and it trails behind them. Then it can be hung from a tree within shooting range, just like other drags. These are easy sellers and

should be combined with scents, possibly as a sweetheart deal or BOGO opportunity. I buy these before and during the season. Hunters in your store will, too. Code Blue's Rope-A-Dope is like a giant drag, but it hangs from a limb. Scent can be applied to the bottom and bucks or does sniff, rub and gravitate to the spot.

Dripper dispensers in easy-to-hang pouches have become vogue and should be super-sellers. These have a



hole in the bottom for hanging and a dripper dispenser with a screw-off cap. Code Blue has a Code Red line, with its Buck Urine Dripper and Doe Estrous Dripper among the top items. Again, they're easy to use and a cool product hunters will buy multiples of. Consider some kind of 4+1 bargain or discount. Scent pellets, like those from Code Blue, are perhaps easiest to use and don't involve liquids that could spill or get smashed in a pack. The scent pellets can be dispersed in a mock scrape and then become part of the soil when water is applied or it rains. Again, they're an easy-selling item with months of sales possibilities from pre- through peak-rut.

If the wind is constant, many hunters like to fog up the place with a mister or aerosol product. Wildlife Research Center's pressurized Premium Spray Cans include Buck Nip and the legendary Golden Scrape, both of which are powerful and have proven to be successful. These aerosol or mist dispensers can be used on vegetation, near a blind or stand, or at a specific spot for a shot.

Which scents to carry? That's on you to decide, as the top brands offer

proven products. Wildlife Research, Tink's, Code Blue, Black Widow Deer Lures, James Valley Scents, Hodag, ConQuest and others you may know or stock already have name-identification and longevity. The ConQuest line, including its EverCalm scent, flew under the radar for a long time, yet now is a top brand. James Valley has been around for a while.

Don't overlook local or regional favorites, either. Smokey's Deer Lures in West Virginia is a longtime best-seller in the hills and hollers of the Mountain State. Along with urine- and estrous-based scents, Smokey's has scents from bucks' and does' interdigital, pre-orbital, tarsal, and metatarsal glands. Another down in Alabama is Shine's White Oak Acorn Scent, which is a cover scent long favored by hunters who tried to keep it quiet. Be aware of your state regulations regarding scents from real deer or produced with synthetic formulas; thanks to CWD, some states require the latter. Stocking some of these regional and under-the-radar favorites can get your hunters' attention and perhaps ring up a few more sales. **HR**







# Stocking Youth and Women's Gear

Don't be afraid to dedicate a section of your store to the small-but-growing segment of hunters who don't fit into traditional men's gear.

BY ACE LUCIANO

Growing up in an active outdoors family, we were constantly on the search for better, warmer, and dryer gear for me and my sisters. I am old enough to remember the days before Gore-Tex, and, quite frankly, the vast majority of the clothing that we wore would be considered grossly inadequate today.









I shot my first deer at age 12 in November in Montana. The high temperature for that week was -10°F. My hunting clothes consisted of cotton, waffled, long underwear, hand-me-down wool socks, a pair of children's black nylon snow pants, a chamois shirt (also made of cotton), and a parka that (thankfully) had synthetic insulation, but whose exterior was not waterproof.

Thankfully, by then I had grown enough so that I could wear the smallest men's size Sorel pack boots. My previous choices were children's "moon boots" or insulated (though not very well) Northland rubber knee boots. To say I was cold was an understatement. I froze the entire time. We could not sit for longer than 20 to 30 minutes. When I received the gift of a set of insulated camouflage coveralls for my 15th birthday, I thought it was the greatest gift fathomable to receive.

Fast forward a bit, and Gore-Tex hit the market, completely revolutionizing the ability to stay warm and dry in any weather Mother Nature could throw out at you. It was very expensive, but not long after that, other companies followed suit with their own proprietary waterproof and breathable membranes. Materials improved dramatically to a number of choices that were warm, quiet and dry, and which allowed for greater mobility than the old Carhartt coveralls or traditional, bulky insulated outerwear.

My sisters weren't so lucky, and because of that, they never really took to the outdoor lifestyle.

There were no women's nor youth

→ Young hunters will need new clothes almost every year. Affordable apparel will do well for this market.



hunting clothes and gear back then. Boots for children were either rubber and uninsulated or had a great deal of insulation but were not very waterproof. Hunting-specific clothing was limited to men's size smalls, which meant pants that were almost always ill-fitting — but at least ladies and kids could be warm and dry in their treestand or duck blind.



↑ Many stores don't stock a selection of women's clothing because it's still a relatively small market — choosing to carry options women can try on in person can be a real differentiator for you.

Fortunately for all of the women and children out there, and, perhaps, most importantly, for the continued future of the traditional outdoor sports of hunting, camping, fishing, and shooting, that has dramatically changed. Today, most major manufacturers of apparel in the hunting industry make clothing in youth and women's sizes, while companies like Prois, Girls with Guns, DSG and many others make high-quality products specifically designed to fit and perform for women and youth.

It is well known that for at least







the last five years, the fastest-growing segment in the hunting marketplace is women, followed closely by youth. As a business owner, you should follow the trends of the market, as they will give you your best chance at making more sales today and in the future. It will be more than worth your while to add women's and youth clothing to your lineup. Here's why.

**1.** Women control a large majority of the purchasing for most households. Despite women taking an ever-growing place in the workforce, they are still responsible for most purchases. Additionally, having a woman shopping in your store is a great excuse for her husband or significant other to come as well, giving you double the selling oppor-



↑ On average, women control a lot of the household purchases. Why would you not market to them?

tunities. The same goes for children. Young children cannot go to the store alone. They will have a parent with them. Don't decrease your chance of making another sale by 50% because you don't have anything for mom if she's the one that brings the child in. Depending on whose research you favor, the data shows that women

have the ultimate control over 70 to as high as 91% of ALL household purchases.

Fortune 500 companies target moms for good reason. You should, too.

**2.** 22% of households consist of a child or children with a single mother. This is a vast untapped market whose members tend to be exceptionally loyal. People tend to shop at the same grocery store, frequent the same restaurants, and patronize the same businesses for many, many years. The chances are good that if you recruit those customers to your

establishment, they will remain a customer for a very long time. That not only gives you the opportunity to sell them their initial setup of gear, but also other items like guns, bows, accessories, boots and more.

**3.** There really aren't many stores that cater to women and children. The outdoor marketplace has been rather slow to come around to selling to women and youth. Many apparel companies still don't offer specialty apparel for women and chil-







dren. The good news for the consumer is that more and more are doing so every year. The good news for you is that you now have the opportunity to add not one, but several lines to your lineup and bring those potential buyers to your store. Many retailers aren't willing to dedicate floor space to what they see as niche products — which means you have the opportunity to be the go-to shopping place in your area where women and kids can actually try on the clothes they're looking to purchase.

**4.** Many women and youth are brand new customers to the marketplace. Many of them have never bought a coat, pants, gun, bow, or any of the ancillary gear required for hunting or shooting. That means that, despite today's consumer being more educated than ever before, chances are that they will not have as much experience comparing brands and types of apparel or equipment.

This is not an excuse to take advantage of a customer, but it does stack the deck in your favor when it comes to making a sale the first time or several times that they come in. Having several high-quality choices that are priced competitively will give you a distinct advantage when the customer is in front of you.

**5.** More distributors are now carrying women's and youth gear. What that means is you will not have to order large amounts of inventory from manufacturers in order to sell products for women and children. Some stores go so far as to have a rack of demo gear on the sales floor to try on for fit, feel and function, then are available to either order the product in or even have it delivered directly to the customer's door within a few days. One of the good things Amazon has done in the marketplace is condition people to not be averse to having things shipped to them.

One of the biggest complaints about Amazon is the inability to touch, feel and try things on before ordering.

There is a downside to this as well. It is very important that you make sure that your pricing is in line with the market, as it is very easy for a customer to check what everyone else is selling it for, including direct-ship companies like Amazon. Yes, it is not the ideal situation, but taking care of your customer in this way will make them more likely to buy from you in the future — especially if it's something you have in stock and they can take home.

**6.** Thanks to a plethora of high-quality gear, guns and accessories, consumers have become accustomed to purchasing bigger ticket items with the anticipation that they will last over time. Youth guns and bows tend to hold their value for the customer. What that means is that if their child grows out of their gun or

bow in a year or two, it is easily sold on the secondary market for almost as much as they paid for it.

The smart business owner takes this into account and will offer a trade-in value for smaller-sized items such as these. Now, not only can you get multiple sales from the same customer, but you have the opportunity to gain another new customer by selling them the used gear that was just traded in. It's win-win-win for everyone.

The fact that there is an increase in the number of women and youth in the firearms, hunting, fishing and outdoor world is good news for many reasons. It keeps the power of the purse over conservation squarely in the hands of those who are closest to the source, brings more opportunities to all due to the expanded marketplace and, perhaps most importantly, can make a significant impact to your bottom line. **HR**





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# Fighting Social Media Trolls

Dealing with trolls? Here's when to block, when to ignore and when to dig in and engage.



BY HANNAH STONEHOUSE HUDSON

**T**he internet is full of negativity, and it's particularly bad when it comes to the subject of firearms. Internet rumors, fake news on both sides of the aisle and internet vigilantes with nothing better to do than sit behind their screen and spew hate are just some of the issues retailers face while trying to market a business online.

The impulse, of course, is to strike back in one way or another. But no matter how right you are about whatever it is you're talking about, you can ruin your reputation and your business with one mishandled or misconstrued statement. Here are some tips to keep you out of trouble online when you are dealing with negativity.

- Never take anything personally. Ever. The people who are the most successful at social media marketing, especially during a crisis, realize two things:

one, that the person on the other side of the screen does not realize they are a real person, and two, that the person on the other side of the screen is also a real person.

What do I mean by that?

The person on the other side of the screen acting in an irrational or combative manner has something else going on in their life that has nothing to do with you, and they are projecting their negativity on to you. If you engage with that person in the same way they engage with you, you lose. They have spread their negativity and agenda on to you and distracted you from making a living.

On the flip side, you must see that they are a real person, with real feelings and opinions. If you do that, it will be much easier to craft a response that calms that person down, or at least shows the rest of the social media lurkers





that you are a rational, professional and caring human being.

- Use the “block” button as needed—and don’t be stingy about it. Some people are on your page just because they are bored. You can usually tell because they start just responding to you in memes or GIFs. Don’t argue, just block and ignore. Others are there to trip you up, waiting for you to make a mistake, even baiting you to do so, so that they can “expose” you, and if that’s the case, then it is really important to block them. Keep in mind, too, that this latter type of troll will continue their attacks through fake accounts as well, so be wary if you see a flurry of activity, especially if wording, memes and GIFs start to look too similar.

- If you see a person who does have a valid concern or someone who

**“This won’t apply to everyone, but it applies to enough that it’s worth emphasizing: Never administer a social media account while under the influence!”**

wants to have an intelligent exchange of ideas online, try to move that conversation into private messaging. This creates a more personal interaction in which both people are more likely

to have a constructive conversation.

It also helps you as a business owner discover if having such a conversation was the true intention of that person on the other side of the screen; if they were just in the public comments to get attention, then they will disappear from a private conversation very quickly.

- This won’t apply to everyone, but it applies to enough that it’s worth emphasizing: Never administer a social media account while under the influence! When we’re not sober, we lose our ability to temper our responses to negative comments about our posts. This inevitably leads to a fight online, usually including screenshots of any ridiculousness that comes out of it.

Far too many people are looking to get glom on to online drama — that’s

why they’re called trolls — and when you engage with them on their level, you will blow up online and not in a good way. Bottom line, if you take part in the after-work happy hour or have a glass of wine with dinner, step away from social media until you’ve had the next morning’s cup of coffee.

As beneficial, productive and entertaining as internet and social media are, they are, unfortunately, also the places where a wealth of negativity and drama play out. Do not get sucked in and damage your online reputation by participating in the negative side of things. Instead, build a viable online community, one that works to profit your business, by adding value through positive interaction. In the long term, the algorithm will reward you for your efforts. **HR**



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## HUNTING RETAILER GEAR ROUNDUP

# Big-Game Ammunition

Be sure your big-game patrons are properly armed with premium ammunition for the upcoming fall hunting seasons.

BY GORDY KRAHN

Nothing has a greater impact on hunting success than bullet performance, which is why it is so important that big-game hunters feed their favorite rifles the very best ammunition they can get their hands on. And for factory-loaded ammunition, it begins and ends on the business end of the cartridge — with the bullet. A bullet's effectiveness for anchoring big-game animals is determined by four factors: velocity, penetration, expansion and accuracy. Ammo manufacturers address this by using high-quality components and effective bullet

design and construction. The desired result, of course, is a trophy on the wall and protein in the freezer.

Velocity, of course, is the measurement of the speed at which a bullet leaves the barrel and then travels to its destination, measured in feet per second. The velocity of a bullet is determined by a combination of factors including the type of gun and ammunition used, as well as atmospheric conditions such as humidity, temperature and altitude. The higher the velocity, the quicker it will travel downrange, which, in turn, affects trajectory and wind drift.

Penetration and expansion — terminal performance — are the result of bullet design and the materials used. Hunting stout, powerful big-game animals such as elk, moose, bears, deer and others requires ammunition loaded with bullets that pack a significant punch, ensuring a quick, clean kill. Bullets come in a wide assortment of flavors — ballistic tip, jacketed soft points, jacketed hollowpoints, all copper, bonded, etc. It's up to you to help your customers pick the ammo that is best suited to their specific needs.

And, of course, all is for naught if

shot placement is less than precise. When selecting big-game ammunition, it is important to choose a reputable brand and experiment until you find the “silver bullet” that performs best in any specific firearm.

Summer is the peak ammo-buying season, as hunters sight-in their rifles in preparation for fall. And this means now is an opportune time to take advantage of this trend by stocking your shelves with high-quality ammunition that packs a punch for a wide variety of big-game hunting pursuits. Here are a dozen top-shelf options that will get the job done.



### BLACK HILLS AMMUNITION 6.5 PRC 143-GRAIN ELD-X

Think of this as a “step up” from the 6.5 Creedmoor, one of the most popular new cartridges of the past decade. The 6.5 PRC (Precision Rifle Cartridge) pushes the same modern 6.5 high BC projectiles another 250 fps faster than the 6.5 Creedmoor and with comparable accuracy. The 6.5 PRC was designed by George Gardner of GA Precision fame, working with Hornady Ammunition for use with modern high BC projectiles and a wide selection of modern rifles chambered for it. For Black Hills' first 6.5 PRC offering, it chose to load this cartridge with Hornady's 143-grain ELD-X. This bullet combines a high BC and match-level accuracy with the terminal performance of an excellent long-range hunting bullet. [www.black-hills.com](http://www.black-hills.com)



### BARNES PIONEER

Lever gun enthusiasts can now take their trusty guns out of retirement and experience the superior on-game performance of Barnes Pioneer ammunition (\$29.99-\$62.99/Box of 20). Designed specifically and optimized for lever guns and revolvers, this ammo is carefully loaded for optimum terminal performance, delivering deep penetration, massive expansion and weight retention. Each round is engineered for flawless feeding and cycling from tubular magazines for lightning-fast follow-up shots. Pioneer ammo comes in two bullet choices — the Barnes flagship all-copper TSX or XPB projectile or the heavy-for-caliber jacketed lead core Barnes original — in .30-30 Win., .45-70 Govt., .357 Mag. and .45 Colt. [www.barnesbullets.com](http://www.barnesbullets.com)







### FEDERAL PREMIUM ELD-X

Federal Premium ELD-X ammunition (\$52.99-\$82.99/Box of 20) features a match-accurate, hard-hitting hunting bullet with an extremely high ballistic coefficient and a design that provides effective expansion and devastating terminal performance at a wide range of velocities. It utilizes a unique polymer tip that resists deformation to achieve consistent ballistics and initiate extreme-range expansion, as well as a concentric copper jacket and robust jacket shank. It also features an aerodynamic secant ogive, specially formulated propellant and nickel-plated brass. This heavy-for-caliber bullet is equipped with an optimized boat-tail design and is available in chamberings ranging from .243 Win. to .300 Win. Mag. in bullet weights from 90 to 200 grains. [www.federalpremium.com](http://www.federalpremium.com)



### FIOCCHI KNOCK DOWN

The all-new Knock Down series of ammunition by Fioocchi (\$32.99-\$44.99/Box of 50) blends premium components with a precision-engineered monolithic bullet for decisive terminal performance on big game and is available in eight of the most popular hunting calibers. Utilizing an all-copper hollowpoint bullet profiled for maximum accuracy and speed, it delivers controlled expansion for penetration into the toughest game animals while ensuring the kind of energy transfer needed to live up to its name. Knock Down is formulated using Fioocchi's proprietary powder, which burns clean, hot and consistent for reliable accuracy and high velocities to ensure optimum point-of-aim/point-of-impact performance on long-distance shots. Reduced fouling and faster bore cleanup are two additional advantages Knock Down ammunition brings to the discerning hunter. [www.fiocchiusa.com](http://www.fiocchiusa.com)



### FORT SCOTT MUNITIONS .30-06 SPRG. TUI

Fort Scott Munitions .30-06 Sprg. 168-grain Tumble Upon Impact (TUI) match grade ammunition (\$51.98/Box of 20) utilizes a solid copper bullet designed to tumble when it comes in contact with soft tissue, creating a bigger wound cavity than traditional ammunition. Manufactured from copper rods using CNC machines, it is precision machined and loaded with the utmost care within tight tolerances for dependable accuracy and a muzzle velocity of 2,719 fps. Upon entry into soft tissue, the TUI projectile begins to tumble, causing a high degree of energy transfer and massive internal damage. And the solid copper projectile provides hunters with the freedom to pursue wild game where lead ammo is prohibited. [www.fortscottmunitions.com](http://www.fortscottmunitions.com)



### HORNADY 7MM PRC ELD-X PRECISION HUNTER

Hornady's 7mm PRC ELD-X Precision Hunter ammunition (\$71.40/Box of 20) features its ELD-X bullet with Heat Shield tip — an excellent load for any hunting situation because of its effective terminal performance at all practical ranges. It has a muzzle velocity of 3,000 fps and generates 3,497 ft./lbs. of energy. Verified by Doppler radar, the Heat Shield tip defies the effects of aerodynamic heating and retains its shape over its entire trajectory. That combined with a streamlined secant ogive with an optimum boattail design and highly concentric AMP bullet jacket delivers radically superior aerodynamic efficiency. With high-velocity zero- to ~400-yard impacts, the bullet continually expands throughout its penetration path. At low velocity, 400+ yard impacts, the Heat Shield tip drives backward into the bullet to initiate expansion. [www.hornady.com](http://www.hornady.com)







**HSM AMMUNITION TIPPING POINT**

HSM Ammunition has a new addition to its roster of hunting cartridges, the Tipping Point (\$34.99-\$75.99/Box of 20), which combines the Hornady SST (Super Shock Tip) bullet with HSM's 50+ years of crafting highly accurate and reliable ammunition. This flat-shooting and deadly accurate bullet features an HSM orange polymer tip that upon impact drives into the lead core like a wedge, initiating lightning-fast yet controlled expansion. Its secant ogive design, tapered point, increased bearing surface and aerodynamic profile, combined with a boattail base, make the SST more efficient with less drag and greater stability. Tipping Point is available in these popular hunting calibers: .243 Win., 6.5mm Creedmoor, .270 Win., 7mm-08 Rem., .308 Win. and .30-06 Springfield. [www.hsmammunition.com](http://www.hsmammunition.com)



**LEHIGH DEFENSE CONTROLLED CHAOS**

Lehigh Defense Controlled Chaos ammunition (\$66.49/Box of 20) features a .308 Win. 152-grain bullet that leaves the barrel at 2,800 fps and delivers a devastating punch via its "Controlled Chaos" design. It generates 2,646 ft./lbs. of energy at the muzzle and upon impact sheds the front portion of the bullet into multiple petals that radiate outward away from the bullet's initial trajectory path, resulting in a massive energy spike. The bore diameter base of the bullet continues and penetrates deeply in a straight line. Both the temporary and permanent wound cavities created by this bullet separation is dramatic, producing impressive terminal performance. Solid copper Controlled Chaos bullets meet the criteria of states and jurisdictions that require lead-free projectiles for hunting. [www.lehighdefense.com](http://www.lehighdefense.com)



**REMINGTON PREMIER LONG-RANGE SPEER IMPACT**

Speer Ammunition has partnered with its sister brand Remington in Big Green's new line of Premier Long-Range ammunition (\$59.99-\$97.99/Box of 20). This is the first time Speer's Impact bullets will be available in loaded ammunition, in seven popular cartridge options. Built for hunting and long-range shooting, Speer's Impact is a tough bonded bullet that penetrates deep on targets yet doesn't break apart on closer shots. When longer shots are needed, the patented Slipstream polymer tip helps expansion start at 200 fps lower than standard polymer tips. Adding to the performance of the Speer Impact bullet is its aerodynamic profile. It features a sleek boattail bullet design, and its rear-adjusted center of gravity promotes long-range accuracy. [www.remington.com](http://www.remington.com)



**SELLIER & BELLOT EXERGY BLUE**

Featuring a new generation of lead-free bullets, eXergy Blue big-game hunting ammunition from Sellier & Bellot employs a modern, highly efficient design incorporating a boattail base with a new pointed tip for flat trajectory and maximum retained energy — enhancing expansion and terminal performance at all ranges — while its solid copper construction maximizes weight retention. The eXergy Blue is available in a wide variety of calibers, including the popular 120-grain 6.5 Creedmoor, which leaves the barrel at 2,851 fps and generates 2,165 foot-pounds of energy at the muzzle. MSRP: NA [www.sellierbellot.us](http://www.sellierbellot.us)







### SIERRA GAMECHANGER

Sierra GameChanger ammunition (\$33.99-\$79.99/Box of 20) is produced with painstaking attention to detail, with every cartridge hand-inspected for quality before going into the box. Available in 10 popular hunting calibers ranging from .223 Rem. to .300 Win. Mag. — with bullet weights from 64 to 180 grains — and topped off with the company's GameChanger bullet, Sierra GameChanger ammunition is the perfect combination of accuracy and bone-punching terminal performance all packed in a precisely tuned cartridge. This ammunition is made with the same dedication to perfection the craftsmen at Sierra are known for. [www.sierrabullets.com](http://www.sierrabullets.com)



### PETERSON CARTRIDGE LOADED AMMO

Beginning in late 2023, Peterson Cartridge will begin manufacturing and distributing its own line of loaded ammunition, available in nine hunting calibers focused on Western big-game hunting and three tactical offerings (\$72.99-\$279.99). All hunting calibers will be available loaded with two bullet options — premium copper-jacketed lead core and turned-copper solid. The tactical calibers will be loaded with a premium match-grade bullet. Available hunting calibers will include: 6.5 PRC, 7mm PRC, 7mm Rem. Mag., .280 Ackley Improved, .28 Nosler, .300 Win. Mag., .300 WSM, .300 PRC and .300 RUM. Tactical calibers will be offered in .300 Norma Mag., .338 Lapua Mag. and .375 CheyTac. [www.petersoncartridge.com](http://www.petersoncartridge.com)

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BY GORDY KRAHN

# HUNTING RETAILER NEW PRODUCTS



## RETTIG & ASSOCIATES PISTOL STATION

Handgun enthusiasts looking for a lightweight, sturdy, safe way to store or display their pistols need look no further than the Pistol Station by R&A, made from high-quality injection-molded plastic. It features a sleek, sturdy base that allows pistols to stand muzzle down on stainless-steel rods, the ultimate position for safety. The rods can be rotated around and stored flush with the underside of the base, so the Pistol Station can then be stacked and stored or tossed into a duffel bag for a trip to the range. The Pistol Station is an affordable option not only for consumers, but for retailers as well — used to display pistols in the case or on the counter when showing customers. MSRP: \$34.99 [www.pistolstation.com](http://www.pistolstation.com)

## WOOX PURE COMPACT EDC KNIFE

The new Pure compact folding knife from Woon features a 3.25-inch-long stainless-steel blade and measures 7.5 inches when open. It has stylish American walnut handles and weighs only 2.7 ounces. The AISI D2 steel blade has an attractive satin finish and is operated with a peg actuator held in place with a solid liner locking system, and a custom pocket clip ensures it stores securely. The Pure compact folding knife is a great choice for outdoorsmen and women who want a classically designed compact folder with EDC durability. MSRP: \$149 [www.wooxstore.com](http://www.wooxstore.com)



## HORNADY LOCK-N-LOAD CLASSIC RELOADING PRESS

The simple, effective engineering in the Lock-N-Load Classic single-stage press from Hornady gives reloaders complete control, dependability, precision and consistency when working with their favorite ammunition recipes. Its uniquely angled, solid cast frame is designed to ensure perfect die and shell holder alignment and allow users to see and access the cartridge throughout the process. The frame is guaranteed never to break or fail. The Lock-N-Load Quick-Change Bushing System lets reloaders swap out dies in seconds, enabling quick and easy caliber changes when reloading cartridges for multiple firearms. The Lock-N-Load Classic's solid steel arm rotates on a steel pin running completely through the frame and the ergonomic, large, ball-style grip reduces effort while improving comfort. MSRP: \$205.73 [www.hornady.com](http://www.hornady.com)



## ANTLER KING SOUTHERN GREENS SEED BLEND

Antler King's Southern Greens provides a palatable food source from early archery season all the way through late gun season. The seed blend includes collard greens, radishes, winter wheat and oats for food plots that grow well from the warm South to the frigid North. Big brassica leaves produce tonnage and provide high amounts of protein and calcium early in the season with low tannin levels, and then the plants turn into a sweet, high-energy food source once frost occurs. Fast-growing winter wheat and oat varieties are palatable from the moment they emerge until well past hunting season, and clover sprouts up in the spring as well to provide the protein necessary for adding body mass. MSRP: \$24.99/8-pound bag/Plants ¼-acre. [www.antlerking.com](http://www.antlerking.com)



## VORTEX RAZOR HD 4000 GB RANGEFINDER

Out to 4,000 yards, the Razor HD 4000 GB ballistic rangefinder delivers all the range, ballistic and environmental data needed for long-range accuracy by taking its top-tier laser rangefinder and building in an on-board GeoBallistics solver ballistic app, which allows shooters to create custom rifle profiles and more. Weighing just 10.1 ounces, it delivers the same four target modes (Normal, First, Last and ELR) and two range modes — Horizontal Component Distance (HCD) and Ballistics Mode (BAL) — high-level shooters and hunters rely on. Built-in environmental sensors (temp, pressure, humidity) in conjunction with the GeoBallistics solver, two wind modes, Vortex Wind Bearing Capture mode and Full Crosswind mode make solving ballistic problems fast and easy in any environment or shooting scenario. MSRP: \$1,199.99 [www.vortexoptics.com](http://www.vortexoptics.com)







### CUPPED WATERFOWL WADER BAGS

Cupped Waterfowl's Wader Bags offer hunters a convenient solution for transporting wet, filthy waders after a day in the field. These durable Wader Bags include a pop-out neoprene mat for easily changing from waders into other footwear without making a mess. They feature a rain flap and a waterproof front storage pocket for keeping gear dry and protected in transit. Airline-approved, Wader Bags also sport a heavy-duty shoulder strap for easy carrying. The universal design is engineered to fit most waders and boot sizes. Wader Bags are available in Mossy Oak Bottomland or Realtree MAX-7 camo. MSRP: \$74.99 [www.cupped.com](http://www.cupped.com)



### HOWA HERA H7 BOLT-ACTION RIFLE

Shooting enthusiasts will not want to miss Legacy Sports International's newest addition to its 2023 firearms lineup, the Howa Hera H7. This affordable bolt-action rifle comes chambered in 6.5 Creedmoor and .308 Win., sporting three different color options — Tan, OD Green and Black — and is equipped with a modern and easy-to-use Howa short-action chassis system. Made from fiberglass-reinforced polymer, with aluminum V-block bedding and an aluminum fore stock, this stock system comes with two spacers, a polymer cheek piece support and two AICS-compatible five-round magazines. The H7 stock system also has M-Lok mounting points for attaching accessories. The Hera H7 is available with three different barrel options: 24-inch heavy, 24-inch carbon-wrapped and 22-inch standard. MSRP: \$839-\$1,299 [www.legacysports.com](http://www.legacysports.com)

### WARTHOG COMBO V-SHARP KNIFE SHARPENER AND CASE

The Combo V-Sharp Xtreme Edge + Case knife sharpening kit from Warthog perfectly balances portability and performance. This lightweight 8-ounce knife sharpening system is made from ABS plastic for durability and weight savings. It offers a wide range of angles with two double-sided 325-grit diamond rods and finishing steels to keep knives in peak condition and ready for the hunt. Using its snap-in rods, users can quickly switch between 17°, 20°, 25° or 30° angles to accommodate any knife blade. MSRP: \$74.99 [www.warthogusa.com](http://www.warthogusa.com)



### XS SIGHTS HENRY BIG BOY CARBINES LEVER RAILS

XS Sights new Lever Rails for Henry Big Boy carbines chambered in .357 Mag. and .44 Mag. are machined from aircraft-grade aluminum and hard coat anodized to provide a tough, lightweight mounting system. The rail bolts on to round barrel models of the Henry Big Boy — no gunsmithing required — for a quick, do-it-yourself upgrade. Machined to Mil-Std 1913 Picatinny specifications, the XS Lever Rail extends from the rear of the receiver to the front sight dovetail cut to allow mounting of any optic — red dot, scout scope or low-powered variable optic — giving users the most versatile mounting platform available. The XS Lever Rail will not fit carbines with brass receivers or carbines with octagonal barrels. Retail: \$72 [www.xsights.com](http://www.xsights.com)



### STEVENS 334 BOLT-ACTION RIFLE

The Stevens 334 bolt-action rifle from Savage Arms features a two-stage adjustable trigger and comes in a Turkish walnut stock option with a silver bolt or a black synthetic stock version with a matte black action to match. This rifle is offered in three popular calibers — .243-Win., 6.5 Creedmoor and .308 Win. — with a 60-degree bolt lift to allow faster loading of follow-up shots, making it a suitable rifle for any hunter or shooter. Other features include two-sling swivel studs, three-position safety, three-round detachable magazine and ergonomic stock and recoil pad. The Stevens 334 has a free-floating, button rifled, carbon steel barrel with 11-degree target crown and matte black carbon steel receiver with integrated recoil lug. MSRP: \$389/Black synthetic; \$489/Walnut [www.savagearms.com](http://www.savagearms.com)



### ZEISS FLIP-UP AND FOLD-FLAT LENS COVERS

Zeiss' all-new Flip-up and Fold-Flat Pro lens covers feature stainless-steel hardware, rugged Nylon 11 construction, excellent OEM fitment and a strong, secure design that stays put even when temperatures shift from extreme hot to extreme cold. Smart features, such as the 'L' wrench and spare battery retaining systems and dual clamping arms provide users with a stronger sense of assurance that the lens covers will stay put and ready for the next shot. Lightweight Flip-up and Fold-Flat Pro lens covers retain and secure the shooter's preferred diopter setting and are quiet upon opening and come with a two-year warranty against material and manufacturing defects. MSRP: \$34.99-\$49.99 [www.zeiss.com](http://www.zeiss.com)





# Hunter/Landowner Relations

If we want to keep hunting alive in North America, we've got to make it easier for people to find places to hunt. And that starts with landowners.

BY BOB ROBB

According to the National Deer Association's latest Deer Report, an average of 88 percent of whitetail deer are taken from private lands. "Most whitetails are found in eastern and southern states, and because the most hunters live where there is the least amount of public land, this new data underscores the conservation importance of deer hunting on private land," said NDA Chief Conservation Officer Kip Adams, one of the report's authors. The report includes an estimated 2021-22 season harvest of more than 5.9 million whitetails, with 5.2 million killed on private land, 700,000 on public ground. By region, the statistics show that the rate of private land harvest is 93 percent in the Southeast, 91 percent in the Midwest, and 81 percent in the Northeast. The report did not survey western states.

While this survey highlighted some other, at least to me, eye-opening facts (did you know, for example, that 12 out of the 31 reporting states allow holders of crop depredation permits to take antlered bucks, not just does, any time of year, under any circumstances, using the permits? Seriously?) what it underscores is that, at least for those who desire to hunt the most popular big-game animal in the Lower 48, if we want to keep hunting available for Joe Average, we need to aggressively begin doing two things. They are finding more ways to allow those without the deep pockets

to buy land, lease exclusive hunting rights, or afford pricey outfitted hunts to access private lands, and to also acquire more public hunting land, especially in the east.

As a ham-and-egger who has done most of his hunting down through the years on public lands out West, I've also hunted in virtually every state in the nation, save Hawaii. I know a lot about how hard it is to find places to hunt on private ground and how today's public hunting lands are being pounded. I also know how difficult it has become for the unattached sportsman to obtain permission to hunt private lands. The issue of public land hunting is a topic for another day. The question here and now is, how do we help hunters gain access to private ground without breaking their bank accounts?

It all comes down to the landowner, doesn't it? At the end of the day, they're in total control. If they choose to deny access to John Q. Public and save the hunting for their family and maybe a good friend or two, that's the end of it. So, then, how can we incentivize them to open the gate and allow people to hunt their property?

It's a complex problem with no one-size-fits all answer. State game departments recognize the problem, knowing that if hunter numbers continue to decline — the so-called COVID bump in license sales is over, with hunting license sales down 3.1 percent nationally in 2022 compared to 2021, and roughly only 4.6 per-

cent of the overall documented U.S. population buys a hunting license annually — their budgets will crater. And so they're trying different ways to stem the tide, with the so-called R3 (Recruit, Retention, Reactivation) programs at the forefront of their efforts. That's all well and good. But at the end of the day, if those new or reactivated hunters don't have a place to hunt — and not having a place to hunt is one of the biggest reasons folks give it up — what does it matter?

There are government programs that help. A related finding of the new NDA Deer Report showed that just 27 out of 47 states offer some sort of private-land hunting access program, with the greatest opportunity for new programs in the Southeast, where only three out of 11 states offered such programs in 2022, and where 93 percent of the deer harvest is on private land. On the federal level, the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP), administered under the U.S. Department of Agriculture, provides funding to help State and tribal governments encourage landowners to allow public access to their land for hunting, fishing, and other wildlife-dependent recreation. Individual states have their own programs as well. As an example, the Illinois Recreational Access Program, or IRAP, uses VPA-HIP grant funds to help private landowners protect and restore their land. Landowners who

chose to lease their property to IRAP have a comprehensive habitat/forestry management plan written and are eligible for assistance to implement habitat restoration projects. That land is then opened up to public access.

It's not just about big game hunting. For example, the federal Conservation Reserve Program, signed into law by president Reagan back in 1985, has proven that tying habitat conservation to hunter access works with private lands. And while approximately five million acres were enrolled in CRP programs in 2023, the number of acres that can be retired from agricultural production for CRP has been shrinking of late, much to the detriment of bird hunters and habitat across the Great Plains, and its future is somewhat iffy.

Personally, I've found it easier to access private ground when I take big game off the table, and confine my "ask" to upland birds, waterfowl, small game or turkeys. I also offer to help landowners with their chores, and once I get my foot in the door, I make sure I share my harvest with them. I also know that nothing's forever, and sooner or later the door will probably close for myriad reasons that have nothing to do with me, so I'm always looking for new opportunities.

What's your take? Are there ways you work connecting your customers with local landowners you can share with us? Is this a big issue where you live? Drop me a note at [editor@grandviewoutdoors.com](mailto:editor@grandviewoutdoors.com) and let me know. **HR**





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