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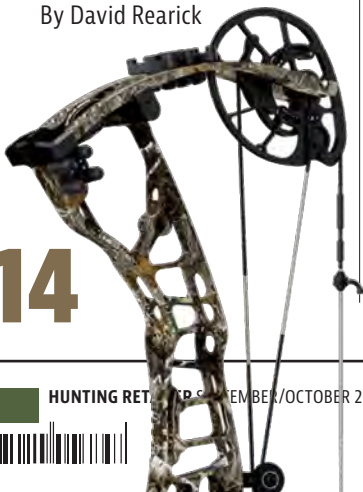
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Hunt the Night: Sightmark's New Wraith Mini Thermal Riflescope

There's never been a better time to get into the thermal game!

BY KEVIN REESE

Hunt the night, they said... and so I did. Roughly 15 years ago, I strapped a first-generation Hawglite to my bow (powered by a monstrous 9v battery and installed with Velcro tape) and with the help of one of the most accomplished, yet unknown, feral-hog bowhunters I know of in the state of Texas, Nate Davey, I arrowed my first. Those early hog hunting experiences with Nate continue to be some of my favorite outdoor memories; in fact, looking back now over the thousands of feral hogs I have killed with rifles, bows, crossbows and even handguns at nighttime, Nate's friendship and mentorship were the catalysts of what later would become my daily work.

Of course, with predator numbers virtually uncountable and the invasive feral hog population estimated at over 3 million in Texas alone, resulting in roughly \$400 million in damages annually, those adventures still primarily occur between dusk and dawn, and for some of us, today's hunts often are better described as eradication. Fortunately, tools of this type of trade also have changed. While I remain an avid bowhunter, my hog hunting is routinely undertaken with an AR platform rifle and thermal riflescope.

The popularity of nighttime hunting, especially with thermal and digital night vision optics, has boomed. Today, scores of states from coast to coast (check your local hunting regulations) allow the use of night vision, digital night vision and thermal

technology to an array of animals after sunset. All said, over the years, such technology has always come at quite a cost.

Fortunately, those willing to hunt the night have a new solution, the Wraith 2-16x35 Mini Thermal Riflescope. At just \$2,000, the Wraith Mini Thermal Riflescope fills a perfect space for affordability, reliability and premium thermal imaging performance. The Wraith Mini Thermal features a French-made Lynred sensor, 384x288 microbolometer sensor resolution, <40mK NETD sensitivity and 17 μ m pixel pitch to deliver premium thermal imaging and an adult-size heat signature detection range of 1,400 yards. The Wraith Mini Thermal Riflescope also includes 2x - 16x zoom with a base magnification of 2x, 35mm F1.0 germanium objective lens, 1024x768 OLED display, five color themes, nine reticle types in 10 different color options, multiple rifle profiles and onboard video to a micro-SD card (up to 256 GB, sold separately). Roughly the size of an ACOG, the Wraith Mini Thermal Riflescope is quite compact, weighing just over 19 ounces and measuring roughly 6.5 x 3 inches. Learn more about the Sightmark Wraith Mini Thermal Riflescope at www.sightmark.com.

Cover photo by Luke Kjos

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How to Prevent Employee Burnout

Workers are burning out at record levels, but it doesn't have to be that way.

BY KEN WYSOCKY

The pandemic may have receded, but its impact still is profoundly felt in the workplace as employees — reeling from stress and overwork — continue to leave jobs in record numbers in what's being called the Great Resignation. As such, employee burnout is one of the leading problems facing organizations today.

“It was already an issue reaching a boiling point before the pandemic,” says Jennifer Moss, a noted speaker and workplace culture consultant. “But now I'd say it's a bigger problem than ever before. The root causes of burnout have exploded ... and it's a global phenomenon.”

“There's a lot of cynicism and

hopelessness — employees are tired and disengaged.”

In fact, about a year before the pandemic even hit, the World Health Organization classified employee burnout as an official disease in 2019, notes Moss, who also wrote a recently published book titled *The Burnout Epidemic: The Rise of Chronic Stress and How We Can Fix It*.

Moss says there are six major causes of burnout:

- Overwork, which is the leading factor.
- A lack of fairness, particularly in terms of discriminatory behavior toward women.
- Insufficient agency as employees

have little or no chance to disconnect from work, even late at night, and often are asked to pick up the slack of departed colleagues.

- Insufficient pay or rewards for their extra efforts.
- Lack of community, which leads to feelings of loneliness and isolation as employees work from home and don't always get a chance to meet new co-workers or even new managers.
- Mismatched skills as employees take on additional duties that departed colleagues leave behind. “We need to view burnout as a serious problem, not just whiny millennials complaining about their work/life balance,” Moss says.

SELF-CARE ISN'T ENOUGH

Many employers take steps to alleviate burnout. But while they're well-intentioned, these efforts often are off-target and misguided. As an example, Moss cites things such as meditation and yoga rooms and providing days off of work.

These things can be helpful, she notes. But too often, people don't have the time or the energy to practice self-care.

“And giving someone a day or two off from work doesn't resolve the workload issue, so they're just putting a Band-Aid on the problem,” she says. “We're helping people downstream, but we need to help them upstream.”



“We’re giving people ice cream when they need water,” Moss continues. “Everyone loves ice cream, but they can’t survive without water.”

TELLTALE SIGNS OF BURNOUT

How can managers tell if their employees are suffering from burnout?

High turnover is one telltale sign, as are high-performing employees who suddenly become withdrawn and disengaged, underperform or call in sick frequently.

“When high-performing employees suddenly stop performing, managers tend to think they’re just underperforming when they’re actually burning out,” Moss notes.

In addition, managers need to be attuned to the language employees use when they talk about work.

If they use “fixed” terms, such as “always” and “never,” that’s another sign of burnout, Moss points out.

“Managers need to be much better at actively listening. They can play a huge role in identifying the language of burnout.”

Superstar employees that leave high-paying jobs or that make sharp career pivots also are strong burnout indicators.

POLICY-DRIVEN SOLUTIONS

Because burnout is typically an organizational problem, not an individual one, and the root causes are institutional and policy-driven, it requires policy-driven solutions.

The good news is that organizational leaders have several strategies at their disposal.

“For example, we need more psychological safety for employees,” Moss says. “Employees shouldn’t be forced to answer emails at 11 p.m. and should be protected from bullying and sexual harassment.”

Workers also need more equitable



maternity leave and better child-care policies, she adds.

Furthermore, on a larger level, organizations need to think more about how to value, inspire and protect employees instead of trying to solve burnout with downstream, self-care tactics.

SETTING BOUNDARIES HELPS, TOO

That’s not to say that individual employees can’t advocate for themselves, either, she points out. For example, high-performing employees generally tend to be perfectionists who think everything is important and needs their attention.

But it would behoove them to do some self-reflection and understand they must set up buffers that can help relieve stress. A good example is deciding to not attend certain meetings that aren’t central to their jobs — and then not taking it personally when they’re not invited to those meetings, Moss says.

“They need to look at that as a time blessing,” she suggests. “If you’re working on urgent needs all

the time, then you’re not actually working on priority needs — and that’s simply not sustainable.

“So high performers need to create space and manage stakeholder expectations. They should use their out-of-office notification when they need a few hours and block off time on their calendars. We all need to learn how to better manage our technology.”

PARADIGM SHIFT REQUIRED

Employees also need to be more diligent about separating their work and home lives. Furthermore, team managers — as well as organizational leaders who create a culture that prizes employees who are responsive and connected to work 24/7 — need to change those expectations and honor employees’ needs to focus on home and family, Moss says.

“Burnout isn’t resolved unless everyone is committed to it. And if you have a conversation with your employer and nothing changes, then maybe it’s time to quit.”

Employees need to realize it’s not a sign of defeat to take another

job. And with record levels of job openings, it’s actually a good time to be looking, she notes.

“But I’d also warn people to not just make a change for the sake of change. You need to ask potential employers the kind of questions that you need answers to. Do your research on things like levels of attrition, mental health policies and which industries are more prone to employee burnout.

“The last thing you want to do is take a new job and find the new company has the same culture as the organization you just left.”

Despite the gloomy statistics about burnout, however, Moss is heartened by what she sees occurring in companies and organizations that recognize burnout as a legitimate issue and are doing something about it.

“From what I’m hearing and seeing, there’s a huge shift occurring across the board as organizations take more responsibility for their employees’ mental health than ever before. That’s a great sign and it bodes well for the future.” **HR**



Over-and-Under Shotguns

Customers looking for a new over-and-under have plenty of options, including these three new standouts.



BY MARK CHESNUT

When it comes to hunting shotguns, there's just something special about a lightweight over-and-under double gun that has special appeal. For many hunters, there's no other type of shotgun they'd rather take to the field in pursuit of everything from ruffed grouse and woodcocks in the northeast to bobwhites and ringnecks in the Midwest.

Sure, semi-autos have their fans—as they should. Their quick follow-up shots combined with higher capacity than double guns make them appealing to many hunters and sport shooters. Pump-action shotguns are the same, as there are those who would rather head to the duck or goose blind empty-handed than take a gun other than their trusty pump. Their simple operation and super tough action are also great in inclement weather or bad conditions like mud and sand.

Still, there's something special about a well-balanced, smooth-swinging over-and-under. To an aging sentimental hunter like me, a good over-and-under provides a feeling of everything being right with the world and brings to mind

special times when I've shouldered one and dropped a grouse or pheasant, then watched as my gun dog retrieved the prize to hand. That's a picture most hunters can envision without even trying too hard.

One thing about over-and-unders that leave some hunters sour is the typically high price tag. But it's a good idea to remind your customers that the old saying, "You get what you pay for," applies to shotguns just as much as any other commodity. In fact, it's hard for many hunters to put a price tag on the feeling of approaching a setter on staunch point, then flushing a wily, cackling rooster pheasant and dropping it with a well-placed shot from a double gun.

When it comes to high-quality over-and-under shotguns, there are lots of companies out there that make outstanding products. But hunters — and, consequently, retailers — usually can't miss when they choose a scattergun manufactured and marketed by one of the "Three Bs."

Let's take a look at three new over-and-under models offered this year by Benelli, Beretta and Browning.





BENELLI 828U STEEL

Benelli's 828U series of over-and-under shotguns melds classical styling with advanced engineering. As a result, it has been a great hit among hunters and sport shooters alike.

This year's new 828U Steel model is likely to match that popularity among gun buyers in the upcoming year or so. The 828U series made its mark on the shotgun scene due largely to its innovative and patented steel lock plate, which locks to the back of the barrel to contain shotshell pressure and prevent its transfer to the receiver, eliminating the wear and tear on the receiver and hinge that traditional over-and-under platforms sometimes suffer.

The 828U Steel is made with a steel receiver instead of the aluminum used in the other models in the series. This adds a slight amount of weight to the gun to

help mitigate recoil when using heavier loads and offers a subtle balance shift for smoother swings — even on fast-moving game birds or clays.

The new 828U Steel is available in 12- and 20-gauge. Barrel lengths in 12-gauge include 26, 28 and 30 inches, and in 20-gauge, barrels are available in lengths of 26 and 28 inches. Weights are 7.55 to 7.75 pounds for the 12-gauge models and 6.85 to 6.95 for 20-gauges. The vent rib barrel features a fiber-optic front sight with red insert. The stock and forearm feature AA-grade walnut with a satin finish, making the 828U Steel a very fine-looking scattergun.

Note that the new Benelli won't be for all customers. With an MSRP of \$3,399, some might not give it a second look, but discerning gun buyers will realize the value of the gun.



BERETTA ULTRALEGGERO

Bird hunters looking for a lightweight shotgun that swings with the best of them might find their new bird gun in the new Beretta Ultraleggero. Designed specifically to be the lightest steel-receiver shotgun on the market, the Ultraleggero delivers the same strength and balance characteristic of other Beretta shotguns with a lighter steel receiver and techno-polymer receiver inserts.

Available in 12-gauge, the attractive over-and-under shotgun features a wood stock and rounded, Schnabel forearm with distinctive checkering. The stock uses the company's extra light recoil pad for recoil absorption, comfort and stability when shouldered. With its closed-cell structure, the pad is also abrasion and weather resistant.

The gun's side plates feature a cutting-edge floral motif that adds greatly to

its aesthetics. And according to the company, side plates can be customized and 3D printed with personal designs for those who want to make their gun one of a kind. The double's 3-inch chambers ensure that those who wish to shoot magnum cartridges loaded with lead, steel and HP steel can do so.

The Ultraleggero's Steelium Optima-Bore HP barrels ensure superior quality performance and consistent shot patterns. Available barrel lengths are 26 and 28 inches, and the barrels accept Beretta's OCHP choke tubes.

The gun's light weight is likely to appeal to lots of upland hunters, with the 26-inch model weighing 6.4 pounds and the model with 28-inch barrels tipping the scales at only 6.6 pounds. MSRP for the Ultraleggero is \$2,999.





BROWNING CITORI COMPOSITE

I first shot Browning's Citori shotgun when the company sent me a 28-gauge model to take on a grouse and woodcock hunt in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan some 25 years ago. That experience found me falling in love with the gun, and I've never shot a Citori since then that I didn't enjoy immensely.


This year Browning has introduced the brand new Citori Composite. This over-and-under is basically the legendary Citori shotgun trusted by hunters and target shooters for the last 50 years, but with the advantages of a composite stock and forearm.

For those asking why Browning would make a Composite Citori, the company


is more than happy to provide an answer: "In addition to being tough and weather-resistant, composite also allows for the shape of the stock to be manipulated. The dimensions of the grip areas can be made thinner to better fit shooters of all sizes. The addition of rubber over molds also improves grip."

The Citori Composite is available in 12-gauge with 26-, 28- or 30-inch barrels. Barrels are blued and polished, and the stock and forearm have a non-glare composite finish. Weight of the 26-inch-barreled model is 7.4 pounds.

The MSRP of the Citori Composite is \$2,199, making it \$1,200 less than the Benelli and \$800 less than the Beretta, which puts it in the price range of more customers hunting for a new bird gun. **HR**




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Get Your Full Draw of Bowhunting Sales

A dirty-dozen roundup of the latest, greatest compound bows and crossbows

BY KEVIN REESE

The Father of Bowhunting, Fred Bear, once quipped, “The history of the bow and arrow is the history of mankind.” Truth be told, he may not have realized just how right he was. Bowhunting dates further back than any of us knew up to 2010. In August of that year, researchers discovered

arrowheads dating back to roughly 64,000 years ago. Scientists suggest the arrowheads even contained remnants of blood and bone! European researchers found archery equipment estimated at 52,000 years old. Both discoveries reveal archery and bowhunting actually dates back to the Middle Paleolithic Period, ending

40,000 years ago. Today, bowhunters nationwide (and worldwide) flock to the woods, bows and arrows in hand, to connect with our ancient ancestry, pay homage to human history and satisfy their primal urge to provide. Of course, it’s so much better to be alive at a time when we can truly capitalize on advancing archery tech-

nologies. Even better for business, bowhunting remains an incredibly popular method of taking game in the U.S. Check out this roundup of compound bows, as well as a few crossbows, to get more hunters in the woods and in touch with hunting ancestry through the ages.



BOWTECH CARBON ONE

Continuing the archery industry's carbon-fiber trend, BowTech unveiled the flagship Carbon One in January 2023. In BowTech's own words, the Carbon One is "dressed to kill" and offers the smoothest shooting experience "before, during and after the shot." Carbon One features include carbon riser, DeadLock Cam System, Orbit dampeners and Integrate Mounting System (IMS) dovetail for compatible arrow rests. The Carbon One boasts a draw length of 25.5 to 30.5 inches with a 6.6-inch brace height and overall weight of 4.5 pounds. The bow measures 30 inches axle to axle and is available in 50-, 60- and 70-pound draw weights. IBO speed is reported 335 fps. While it's not the company's fastest bow, not everything is about speed. www.bowtecharchery.com



BOWTECH SR350

While BowTech has never been hyper-focused on speed, the company has routinely pursued unparalleled combinations of smoothness, speed and overall shooting comfort, including models deemed to be "speed" bows; case in point, the SR350. The SR350 is considered the brand's best mix of speed and silky smooth draw. The SR350's precise balance and DeadLock Technologies produce the brand's best mix of arrow-flight stability and repeatable accuracy. Perhaps nearly as important in a top-shelf bow, BowTech's Orbit dampeners eliminate vibration and allow for ridiculously quiet shooting. The SR350 features a draw-weight range of 25 to 30 inches, draw weights of 50 to 70 pounds, 33-inch axle-to-axle length, 6-inch brace height and IBO speed of 350 fps in a premium-finished bow weighing 4.4 pounds.



MATHEWS PHASE4 29

As the name implies, the Mathews Phase 4 29 compound bow measures 29 inches axle-to-axle and boasts Bridge-Lock Stabilizers for improved balance, Resistance Phase dampening, CrossCentric Cam with Switchweight Technology, limb-mounted vibration dampeners, 6-inch brace height, draw-weight options from 60 to 75 pounds, 25.5- to 30-inch draw length, 80 to 85% let-off, IBO speed of 340 fps. and 4.48 pounds of weight. www.mathewsinc.com



ELITE ERA

Billed by Elite Archery as the "next era" of carbon bows, the Era is definitely a premium performance offering. The Era boasts a hand-laid carbon-fiber, dual-cage riser; wide, strategically weighted past-parallel limbs and SP Cams with V2 Micro Mods for precise 1/4-inch draw-length adjustments, as well as customized back wall and hold-weight preferences. The Era also features robust, micro let-off adjustability, down to a single percentage point, from 70 to 90%. Elite Archery also developed S.E.T. Technology (Simplified Exact Tuning). S.E.T. allows the Era's limb pivot angle (lean) and lateral position (center shot) to be micro-adjusted for perfect timing, precise accuracy and enhanced shootability. The Era slings arrows at a blistering IBO speed of 336 fps, measures 31.25 inches axle to axle and weighs just 3.95 pounds. Available draw weights include 40, 50, 60, 65 and 70 pounds, the draw-weight range is 25.5 to 31 inches, and the Era's brace height is a forgiving 7.25 inches. www.elitearchery.com

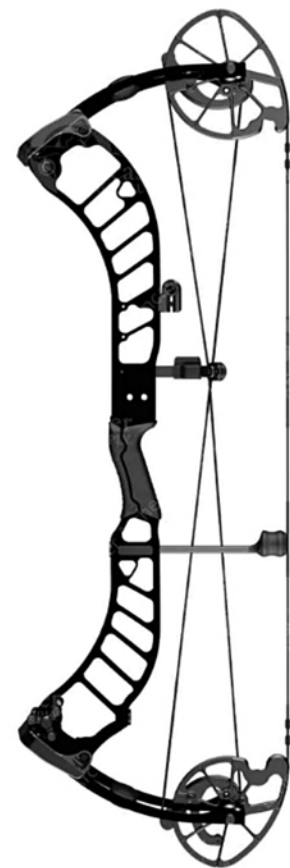


HOYT VTM

Hoyt's latest top-tier offering, the VTM, is the culmination of more than 90 years of archery and bowhunting passion. The VTM's central nervous system remains the Ventum Pro riser; however, product development and advancing technologies continue to enhance Ventum Pro and overall bow performance, including sound reduction of a whopping 31%! As an avid bowhunter often in thick foliage, I prefer the shorter VTM 31's 30.625-inch axle-to-axle length. Taller archers may prefer the VTM 34's axle-to-axle length of 33.75 inches. They offer blazing-fast IBO speeds of 342 fps (VTM 31) and 334 fps (VTM 34). Brace heights are 6 inches (VTM 31) and 6.25 inches (VTM 34) and draw lengths are 25 to 30 inches (VTM 31) and 26 to 31 inches (VTM 34). Draw weights for both models range from 30 to 80 pounds. Additionally, both models are available in a robust array of finishes, including Battleworn Gray Cerakote as well as several Origin USA patterns. www.hoyt.com

**PRIME REVEX 2**

Prime Archery's model for improvements relies as much on dealer feedback as it does on bowhunters' feedback. Moreover, Prime is intensely focused on strengthened, easier-to-manage dealer relations in marketing downturns as well as upticks, working hard alongside dealers to ensure they optimize inventory and sales. The Revex plays well into dealer and customer focus. Available as the Revex 2 (32 inches axle to axle), 4 (34 inches axle to axle) and 6 (36 inches axle to axle), Prime offers their latest, greatest design in models to fit nearly every demanding archer. All Revex bow models feature a center-gripped riser for perfect weight distribution; CORE cam system with cam-balancing technology and inline string and cable design for an ultra-smooth, perfectly balanced draw; draw-length mods ranging from 26 to 31.5 inches depending on model; Prime Nanogrip; 15 riser finishes; 11 limb finishes; 40- to 80-pound draw-weight options; and IBO speeds of 338 fps (Revex 2), 340 fps (Revex 4) and 330 fps (Revex 6). www.g5prime.com

**PSE X NOCK ON UNITE**

The PSE x Nock On Unite is available in E2, EC2 and S2 cam systems, with the greatest differences being IBO speeds and draw lengths. The E2 boasts 343 fps with 28- to 32-inch draw lengths. The EC2 is the most universal with an IBO speed of 332 fps and draw length range of 25.5 to 31 inches. The S2 has an IBO speed of 341 fps and draw length from 25.5 to 29.5 inches. All models feature an axle-to-axle measurement of 32.25 inches, draw weights of 60 to 80 pounds, bow weight of 4.8 pounds, brace heights between 6.25 and 6.625 inches and nine finish options. Unite bows also include PSE's FDS (Full Draw Stability) Technology to resist induced torque and enhance accuracy, and EZ.220 Snap Spacer System for micro-adjustable tuning and cam-lean adjustments, down to .020-inch increments. www.psearchery.com

**BEAR LEGEND XR RTH**

The Bear Legend XR RTH is a true grow-with-you bow with a draw weight range of 14 to 70 pounds and draw length of 18 to 31 inches. Built for comfortable shooting, the Legend XR RTH boasts 85% let-off, a 6.25-inch brace height, short 32-inch axle-to-axle design, KillerWave limb dampening system and DHC-XR cam system. Perfect for new archers and bowhunters, the Bear Legend XR RTH comes ready to hunt, thus the RTH, and includes a Trophy Ridge Sight, rest, stabilizer and quiver. www.beararchery.com



MUZZY VXM BOWFISHING KIT

Archers are sure to recognize Muzzy VXMs Oneida lever-action technology. Incorporating Oneida's system delivers the perfect combination of smooth draw, comfortable shooting and hard-hitting performance at the lower weight associated with bowfishing, 25 to 50 pounds. The Muzzy VXM features a lightweight magnesium cast and machined riser, adjustable draw weight and draw length (26 to 29.5 inches), 0 to 60% let-off, stainless steel barrel nuts and Mossy Oak Coastal Elements Cloud Band Camo finish. The kit includes a KD Pro Push-Button Reel with integral reel seat, Mantis II Arrow Rest, fiberglass arrow with Muzzy Carp Point head and 150 feet of 150-pound pre-spooled Tournament Bowfishing Line. www.feradyne.com



TENPOINT STEALTH 450 CROSSBOW

Considered "TenPoint's fastest forward-draw crossbow ever," the Stealth 450 offers a powerhouse combination of shooting, bolt velocity, and ease of cocking/decocking. The TenPoint Stealth 450 also boasts a patented AcuSlide Cocking and Decocking System, S1 2-stage trigger, 100-yard EVO-X Marksman Scope, Micro-Trac barrel, and Sentry Bowhanger and, true to its name, it sends arrows at lightning-quick 450 fps. www.tenpointcrossbows.com



TENPOINT WICKED RIDGE RAMPAGE XS

By name alone, it's tough to pass up a TenPoint Crossbow at a mid-range price point; however, the feature-rich Wicked Ridge Rampage XS seems to be a real performance crossbow deal your customers will be hard-pressed to pass up. From back to front, TenPoint's Wicked Ridge Rampage XS Crossbow features a standard or optional XS Tactical stock with up to 2.5 inches of length-of-pull adjustability, 3.5-pound trigger, Pro-View 3x scope with red and green illuminated reticles, XS chassis with standard cocking device or optional built-in AcuDraw cocker, 15-inch cocked width, 31.5-inch overall length, 175-pound draw weight and bolt velocity of up 390 fps. With the XS Stock and AcuDraw cocker, the Rampage XS weighs just 5.8 pounds.



BARNETT HYPER RAPTOR

Touted as Barnett's "perfect hunting machine," the 2023 Hyper Raptor boasts a boatload of premium crossbow features at a mid-range price point your customers are sure to appreciate. Barnett Hyper Raptor Crossbow features include blistering velocity of 410 fps and 142 ft./lbs. of kinetic energy using with included small-diameter 20-inch HyperFlite bolts, overall weight of 7.1 pounds, compact 7.25-inch axle-to-axle width in the cocked position, step-through riser, Raptor limbs, Infinity cams, pivoting limb pockets, Soft-Lok Bristle Bolt Retainer System and a TriggerTech trigger. The Hyper Raptor Crossbow comes ready to hunt with three bolts, a 4x36 illuminated multi-reticle scope, side-mounted quiver and a Hyper Raptor CCD stock. www.barnettcrossbows.com



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THE ARCHERY BUSINESS PAVILION AT SHOT SHOW IN 2024

Archery Business, the voice of the archery industry for nearly 50 years, has teamed up with the National Shooting Sports Foundation'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 and archery companies brought together in a common space.

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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

In mid-February 2023, NSSF — The Firearm Industry Trade Association — announced the creation of a new exhibit area for the archery industry at NSSF's annual SHOT Show. This exciting venture is a collaboration between NSSF and Grand View Outdoors, a leading provider of outdoor content. (*Archery Business* and *Bowhunting World* magazines are part of the Grand View Outdoors family of brands.)

During the months since this big news, many companies that have never attended SHOT Show have stepped up to the plate and booked their space in the Archery Business Pavilion. Take a look back at the July/August 2023 issue of *Archery Business* to read

comments about the new Pavilion from eight early exhibitors. At the end of this article, you'll hear from 10 more company representatives.

The SHOT 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. It attracts attendees from around the world each year, including buyers, media and other industry professionals. Held annually in Las Vegas, it is the largest and most comprehensive trade show for professionals involved with the shooting sports and hunting industries.





Archery Business Pavilion Facts – and Early Exhibitors Weigh In

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. 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.SHOTShow.org/archeryexhibit. Note: Booth space will not be final until this application is completed and the initial deposit is made.



VICTORY ARCHERY – JAYSON BENTCIK, NATIONAL SALES MANAGER

"We've never had a booth at the SHOT Show in the past," said Victory Archery National Sales Manager Jayson Bentcik. "The reason is we didn't feel like we would get our return on investment because the focus of this show was on guns and ammunition.

"Steve Greenwood (general manager) and I have attended the SHOT Show in the past, and it is quite the experience due to the sheer size and location of the event. We walked the floor and held several meetings during the show, but never exhibited as the Victory Archery brand.

"It's our hope that having a booth in the Archery Business Pavilion at SHOT Show will enable our company to showcase our products to outdoor dealers who don't attend archery-only trade shows. Very simply, it's why we decided to book a booth in the Archery Business Pavilion. Any chance we can get to meet dealers face to face, shake hands, and have one-on-one conversations with them has always been a positive experience, and we enjoy it."

Be sure to stop by the Pavilion to see the Victory Archery RIP-SS and the VAP-SS. "These two series of arrows are our newest and most innovative shafts that we have made to date," Bentcik said. "They have been great sellers for us over the last couple of years, and any dealer who hasn't carried Victory Archery arrows in the past should certainly check them out at SHOT Show."

The RIP-SS is a carbon/stainless hybrid arrow. The tough, small-diameter shaft (.204 ID) features layers of stainless steel fused with an advanced 90° 3K carbon weave. Even lighter and faster than its predecessor, the Xtorsion, the RIP-SS boasts a higher FOC and incredible momentum for unmatched penetration and accuracy. The result is a bone-crushing arrow that's less affected by wind and capable of punching through anything in its path. Available in Elite, Gamer and Sport models, RIP-SS arrows have a straightness tolerance of ± 0.001 , ± 0.003 and ± 0.006 inches respectively. They're available in 250, 300, 350, or 400 spines and come equipped with SHOK SS inserts and IP nocks.

The VAP-SS features a .166 micro-diameter shaft for maximum penetration and minimum wind interference. Woven stainless steel mesh is infused with layers of the highest quality Mitsubishi carbon fiber and is finished with a proprietary 90° carbon fiber weave for added hoop strength.

The VAP SS features include Victory's proprietary Ice Nano Ceramic Coating for improved penetration and easy removal from targets. Each VAP SS arrow includes a 50GR Shok TL Aluminum insert (75 gr Stainless steel upgrade available) for improved concentricity and durability. Each set of VAP SS arrows is hand selected into matched batch weights within a ± 0.5 gr and offered in a ± 0.001 , ± 0.003 , or ± 0.006 " straightness tolerance. Booth #80411; www.victoryarchery.com





SUMMIT OUTDOORS – PAIGE SHIPE, ASSOCIATE BRAND MANAGER

"We are excited to attend Shot Show 2024 in the new Archery Business Pavilion," said Summit Outdoors Associate Brand Manager Paige Shipe. "Summit Outdoors is in a unique position in the hunting space, with five niche brands that all stand alone, yet complement each other while in use.

"Shadow Hunter Blinds is the most well-known brand in the Summit Outdoors family, which carries a legacy of hand-built, American-made high-quality products at a value. Showcasing our blinds in a dedicated hunting space at the industry's largest trade show is going to be a game changer for us. I am looking forward to reconnecting with industry partners in just a few short months!"

Designed and built for hunters by hunters, Shadow Hunter Blinds are your American-made, maintenance-free, premium hunting blind. "Backed by our manufacturer's warranty, your investment is one we truly deliver our promise on," Shipe said. "When we say built better, we mean it. They are built the way your grandpa would build it. Lasting for generations to come, our blinds are hand built in the heart of the USA by our Midwest workforce."



The Shadow Hunter Blinds exclusive window system offers 360 degree views and is, according to Shipe, by far the most discreet and quiet window system on the market. The fully adjustable window system adjustments are all made from below the window frame, so you never have to risk your hunt when adjusting windows. The built in drip edge ensures the windows remain weatherproof.

Discreet mode is truly activated with the blind's blackout dual window panels. Eliminate your silhouette by keeping the outer blackout panel up and then make desired height adjustments for your view as needed. This is all while the acrylic window panel is closed to keep you warm and comfortable until you're ready to shoot. Booth #80607; www.shadowhunterblinds.com



OTTER TECHNOLOGIES – BEN NELSON, FOUNDER

"Representing Otter Technologies at SHOT Show 2024 is a true honor," said Otter Technologies Founder Ben Nelson. "I'm excited to showcase how our cutting-edge tool, OtterText, empowers firearms and archery businesses with innovative text marketing solutions.

"Attending SHOT Show 2024 is a thrilling opportunity to connect with industry



professionals. As we unveil Otter Technologies' latest advancements, I look forward to driving growth and success in the firearms and archery sectors."

"We are at the forefront of delivering tailored, comprehensive solutions for retail, ranges and e-commerce businesses in the firearms and archery sectors," Nelson said. "You can empower your business with our suite of services, from text marketing to charge-back protection, reviews management, digital waivers, and customer rewards systems. OtterText covers everything, meticulously attending to every detail to fuel your growth."

You can simplify the digital waiver process with OtterText, seamlessly integrating customer data into your POS platform. You can also leverage this valuable data to create automated text campaigns, enticing rewards and garnering positive reviews.

With OtterText, you enjoy the flexibility of running bulk text campaigns, engaging in two-way communication with your customers, and collecting reviews and payments. The OtterText SMS automation optimizes your text marketing strategies, engaging existing and potential customers.

Be sure to visit Otter Technologies in the Archery Business Pavilion at SHOT Show 2024 to learn how partnering with them can unlock your business's full potential.

"Experience seamless integration, innovative solutions, and personalized support tailored to your needs," Nelson said. "Stay ahead in the competitive landscape with OtterText. Let us be your trusted ally, driving business success while you focus on serving your customers with the best products and services in the industry." Booth #80310; www.ottertext.com



PURE ARCHERY GROUP – TODD SNADER, MARKETING BRAND MANAGER

"The dawn of 2024 unveils a thrilling chapter for Pure Archery Group," exclaimed Pure Archery Group Marketing Brand Manager Todd Snader. "With an array of groundbreaking products launching soon, we are poised to redefine archery experiences and inspire a new generation of bowhunters and sports enthusiasts.

"At the SHOT Show Archery Pavilion, we look forward to sharing our passion, knowledge, and state-of-the-art products with everyone, and welcome new opportunities to expand our dealer base. Pure Archery Group is thrilled to join this prestigious event, aiming to extend the reach of our brands to firearms businesses looking to venture into the world of archery. At Pure Archery Group, our passion for precision, innovation and craftsmanship drives us to provide unmatched experiences for archers worldwide.

"As we gear up for the event, we are excited about the prospects of 2024, as the archery participation is seeing growth with numerous new entrants in both hunting and recreational sectors. This expansion presents extraordinary incremental opportunities, and Pure Archery Group stands at the forefront, ready to welcome enthusiasts with cutting-edge products and unwavering dedication."

Be sure to stop by the Pure Archery Group booth to see all the new groundbreaking products – from several of the most recognized and respected brands in the industry, including Bowtech and Diamond compounds, Excalibur Crossbow, TightSpot quivers,



Ripcord arrow rests, Black Gold bowsights, and Octane accessories. Pure Archery Group products are the solution in premium archery equipment to suit the needs of any archer. Booth #80106; www.purearcherygroup.com



TETHRD – GREG GODFREY, CO-OWNER

"Tethrd was born from a group of saddle hunters who were all pretty annoyed," said Tethrd Co-owner Greg Godfrey. "The ultralight minimalist gear they wanted wasn't available. Hunters had to DIY saddles and platforms out of repurposed gear found on eBay or Craigslist. Since the late 1960s there have been a few minimalist elevated hunting options. Sometimes they were called slings, like the Anderson Big Buck Sling, and sometimes they were called harnesses or saddles. When Tethrd launched, all but one saddle hunting company had failed. They hadn't been able to figure out an ultralight system that was intuitive and effective. In 2018, Tethrd decided to build the best ultralight hunting company on the planet, and burst on the scene launching an entirely new elevated hunting tool category.



"In July 2023, we released the Tethrd LockDown Saddle, and it is quickly becoming known as the most comfortable and user-friendly saddle on the planet. Tethrd is all about helping hunters become lighter, faster and more efficient. If our products don't do that, we won't make them."

"We're very excited to attend our first SHOT Show and release yet another new product!" said Ernie Power, one of the Tethrd co-founders. "We've done shows all around the country, but we've never been to the Vegas show." Booth #80613; www.tethrdnation.com



LANCASTER ARCHERY SUPPLY – ANNE STOUT, MARKETING MANAGER

When leadership at Lancaster Archery Supply heard that SHOT was adding a dedicated space for archery vendors in the Archery Business Pavilion at its 2024 convention in Las Vegas, they jumped at the chance for LAS to attend.

"The Shooting, Hunting, Outdoor Trade Show is the largest of its kind in the world," said Marketing Manager Anne Stout. "Lancaster Archery Supply is well known within the archery industry as a leading supplier of bowhunting and target archery gear. But the opportunity to attend 2024 SHOT gives us the chance to spread awareness of our brand to audiences where it might not be as well known."

The hunting market at large, and especially the western hunting market, are audienc-

es among which LAS is seeking to become a household name, and which LAS is ready and able to serve with its ample inventory of pertinent products. Whether you chase elk in the mountains of Montana, pronghorns on the prairies of Wyoming, or whitetails in the coulees of Kansas, Lancaster Archery Supply – with over 89,000 items from more than 700 vendors in stock and available through Lancaster-archery.com - can help you gear up for before, during and after the hunt.



Lancaster Archery Supply opened its doors in 1983 in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. It operates a thriving e-commerce division at Lancasterarchery.com, where bowhunters and target

archery enthusiasts can shop from its extensive inventory. A team of technical experts – available through phone, email or chat – is dedicated to helping online customers make informed choices as they select the gear that's right for their needs.

LAS operates the world's largest archery-only pro shop in south-central Pennsylvania, which also houses the Lancaster Archery Academy, where archers of all ages and abilities can go to learn the sport or to master their skills with a bow and arrow.

"Lancaster Archery Supply has been helping bowhunters and target archers all over the world find success for 40 years," Stout said. "And if SHOT is having an Archery Pavilion at its 2024 convention, then LAS needs to be there." Booth #80710; www.lancaster-archery.com



ORIGINAL MUCK BOOT COMPANY – CHRIS LORENZO, VP AND BRAND GENERAL MANAGER

"Muck Boots are built for those who work hard and love the land," said Chris Lorenzo, vice president and brand general manager at the Original Muck Boot Company. "Our development team taps into the lives of our core users to create footwear solutions that deliver quality, innovation and comfort for active outdoor pursuits. We are thrilled to be showcasing the Muck brand in the new Archery Business Pavilion at the SHOT Show this year to demonstrate our continued support for and development of products designed for hunting and the outdoors."

Visit Muck Boots in the Archery Business Pavilion to see a variety of offerings, including the new Pathfinder. Built for pursuit in most cold-weather conditions, the Pathfinder finds itself at home in a variety of environments; 100% waterproof and



100% MUCKPROOF, the 5mm neoprene bootie is designed for comfort, performance, and all-day wear. Inspired by the flexibility of the highly popular Apex Pro, this boot is equipped with flex notches in the front for added comfort and high-performance. Its stretch-fit topline binding snugs your calf to maintain warmth, while the safety orange airmesh lining improves breathability. The Pathfinder's reinforced toe tip and heel counter provide durability while the modified rubber bob sole quickly disperses debris. Booth #80407; www.muckbootcompany.com



ROCKY BOOTS – BRIAN GERRAIN, VICE PRESIDENT

"The hunting category remains a focus for Rocky's path forward," said Brian Gerrain, vice president for Rocky Boots work, outdoor and western. "Having been one of the original brands to display at the first SHOT Shows, we welcome the opportunity to return to the show, demonstrating our increased and renewed dedication to the outdoor hunting and sportsman segment of the market."

A hunter is only as good as their equipment, and when out in the woods all day, you need a pair of boots that will keep up. Stop by the Rocky Boots booth in the Archery Business Pavilion to check out the 8-inch Rocky Lynx hunting boot. It features 1080 denier Cordura with PU hot melt accents that will resist abrasion and tears in the backcountry. Built from the ground up, this lace-up boot stands on the company's aggressive all-terrain Lynx outsole with cushioned EVA midsole and the Rocky Rebound footbed for comfort that lasts until the hunt is over. Add in Rocky's 1-year-guaranteed Vapor Pass recycled membrane waterproofing to keep moisture out while out on the prowl. Stay warm through the colder months with 400 grams of 3M Thinsulate Insulation, allowing you to hunt longer. Let Rocky help you focus on the hunt, not your cold feet. Booth #80407; www.rockyboots.com



SCENT THIEF
MAKE THE WIND YOUR COVER

SCENT THIEF – JAY CARPENTER, PRESIDENT

"We are excited to be a part of the Archery Business Pavilion this year at SHOT Show 2024," said Scent Thief President Jay Carpenter. "The connectivity and opportunities that SHOT Show provides are cornerstone components of our strategic growth plan. We look forward to having this opportunity to show how Scent Thief's 'No Smell' Technology



can make hunters more effective and productive in their pursuits."

You can see Scent Thief's innovative solution to scent control by visiting them in the Archery Business Pavilion. The company's mission is to revolutionize scent control for hunters and trappers.

Traditional scent control uses enzymes or chemicals that attempt to mask or remove human odor. Scent Thief believes it's nearly impossible to do either. Rather than cover human odor, Scent Thief's patented "No-Smell" technology shuts down an animal's ability to smell. The result is more successful hunts and added confidence in the woods, regardless of wind.

As Scent Thief's patented formula enters an animal's nose, it relaxes the epithelium and the ability to smell. Unlike traditional smell blockers, Scent Thief must be inhaled to temporarily disable an animal's sense of smell. It is so effective that the Department of Justice stepped in when flags were raised about stumping drug dogs. The DOJ required Scent Thief to add an ingredient that would be recognizable by the dogs. The current formula satisfied the DOJ and increased its effectiveness. The added ingredient calms wildlife while still blocking their ability to smell.

A wide range of Scent Thief products offers a complete package for scent control. Apply the field spray on gear, clothes, blinds and surrounding vegetation to block an animal's ability to smell. High and swirling winds are no longer an issue for hunters looking to get in the woods; the Scent Thief Wafer will use the wind to create a "no smell zone" in the surrounding area. Before the hunt, Scent Thief Laundry Detergent and Scent Thief Body Wash use the same patented odor-blocking technology for total coverage. Users interested in the entire system can try either the Hunter's Pack or Trophy Pack for an immersive solution to scent control. Booth #80624; www.scentthief.com



ROCK RIDGE OUTDOORS – TREY FERGUSON, CEO

"We're thrilled to be part of the new Archery Business Pavillion at the 2024 SHOT Show," said Rock Ridge Outdoors CEO Trey Ferguson. "We jumped at the opportunity to bring our full line of products to SHOT Show while highlighting our archery and hunting brands. The 2024 SHOT Show tagline 'This is your SHOT' is very fitting as we look to bring more focus and visibility to the archery market. Be sure to check out our booth to learn more about all that Rock Ridge Outdoors has to offer, meet our amazing sales team, and get a first look at the new products coming in 2024."

Based in Minden, Louisiana, veteran-owned Rock Ridge Outdoors is the parent company of an impressive roster of best-in-class outdoor brands, including American Buffalo Knife and Tool, Cupped Waterfowl, Dead Ringer, The Grind, Mammoth Coolers, ProSport Outdoors, Rogue Ridge, and Telum Tactical. Booth #80307; www.rockridgeoutdoors.com





Innovative Management Matters

Could your management style — from how you manage customers to employees to vendors — use improvement?

BY MICHAEL D. FAW

Managing a hunting retail business is often noted as NOT being an undertaking for the faint of heart. From customers to employees to creditors and vendors, there are many uncontrolled factors and folks that need attention — and managing. Business colleges are filled with many types of management courses, and some of the courses cover the bare basic guidelines in how to manage a wide range of subjects. In business, however, everyone knows that management practices are often situation-specific. No business runs on its own: It needs to be managed.

Have you thought about your management style, and could it be improved or modified? Is your management style hampering your business and profits?

Take an honest assessment and then look at the results — and your options.





BASIC MANAGEMENT STYLES, SIMPLIFIED

There are some basic management practices or styles that go a long way in helping your employees — and also helping you grow as a manager. You will need to do some honest soul searching and reflection to see if you meet one of the standard recognized styles. Those include:

- Democratic — you make decisions based on input from all or most employees.
- Autocratic and authoritative — you decide and control most aspects of the business. It's your way only because it's your business. You are the leader, period.
- Bureaucratic — this is the way it has been done and will be done, often with vague explanations.
- Transformational — you engage employees at numerous levels and let their input guide many parts of the business and how you do things.
- Coach or parent-mentor — You lead employees by being the elder and decision maker in the process.

To determine which one — or parts of others — you fit into as a leader, you need to reflect on your standard decision process and how you engage and interact with employees. For some managers, they often move back and forth in styles used for managing, determined by the situation, the person being contacted, and other factors. The task needing a decision can also influence which direction a manager takes in reaching a decision.

LEARNING MORE MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

Much like every business environment, things are always fluid and can change — or do change often. Vendors come and go, employees

leave and new hires come on board, communities and streets change, new competitors arise, and more outside factors affect what goes on inside your business. As the owner and/or manager, you need to be flexible and stay alert to upcoming changes. A key to meeting those changes could be to change how you manage.

Some business owners have discovered shadowing, and these managers take someone along on a day of their work to see the decisions that need to be made, things/tasks/situations that have to be addressed and other key areas that managers must manage. This introduction to the basics with a shadower following along can help you discover what is really happening in your company and possibly help you prepare future managers to aid you. It lets you take a step back and take an objective look at nearly everything that happens, from the loading dock through the merchandise aisles and out the front door. You have to know all aspects as you strive to explain them to someone else. Yes, this approach takes considerable time, but the person shadowing you could be a possible great candidate to manage in your absence. This can also be a great way to have managers show new hires the many parts of the business. You have to be comfortable discussing top-to-bottom parts of your managing business, but you do not have to delve into dollars in this style.

If you do like to receive employee input when making decisions, polling all your employees takes time, but your employees will often look up to you with a different view because you sought their input — and value their opinion. On the other side of this management coin, you have to be willing to share details on topics ranging from ordering goods to making new hires to starting a new department or offering a service to custom-



ers. This democratic management process obviously has rewards, but employees could feel left out if you make any decisions without them.

While some managers are bureaucrats and like managing by prolonged processes, many steps, and rules that only they understand and know, employees and some customers see this style of management as not only old school but also as unfriendly and unyielding. Managing others can become more important than actually running the business. Unfortunately, managers in this mode also tend to

take any questions from employees or customers as a threat or challenge. This is not the best situation for any business to thrive under, but some companies run with this management style and employees develop a work-around atmosphere.

The coaching or mentoring manager works best with a wide range of employees, but remember that you are the manager and some decisions must be made — and you are the one to make those. Sometimes the decisions need your answer and your years of experience to reach the best answer.



MANAGEMENT BACKGROUND BUILDERS

Managing a business successfully requires a wide range of skills, and many tasks need attention. Successful business managers often must have a strong entrepreneurial mindset.

“Strong skills required for an entrepreneurial mindset, according to recent research, includes problem solving, grit, persistence, resourcefulness, and passion among others,” says Bruce Watley, Director of the University of South Dakota’s Lillibridge Center for Entrepreneurial Studies

and Innovation. “The other thing the research discovered is that entrepreneurs are actually more risk averse. They are more calculated in their decisions and take calculated risks, and they do the research necessary to make better risks instead of just jumping into the frying pan.”

Management styles also correspond to the type of business you plan to create and, to some degree, those employees you will be managing. While managers cannot often be the do-it-all to complete necessary jobs, such as cleaning the store or unloading a

delivery truck and sorting inventory, the manager should know what skills are needed to do those tasks and the time required so another asset — employee time — can also be managed. Great managers are always learning and are flexible in how they delegate and assign tasks.

Some managers, however, have difficulty delegating. Their mindset becomes if you want something done right, you have to do it yourself. Or they view mundane tasks and think to themselves, “I could have done that better or faster.” Remember, as a manager, you have a wide range of tasks that need to be done, and you cannot do it all, so employees are an extension of you. They work with you to meet the challenges and complete the basics and beyond. Managers who have moved up through the ranks and have completed those many tasks in previous jobs often know the full details in getting tasks completed successfully. Experience and common sense can be other great manager skills.

Communication — and sometimes coaching — means managing by thoroughly explaining and covering the details on tasks or projects. Being able to communicate, especially with new or seasonal employees, is another manager skill that needs to be developed and frequently applied. There are several great online courses that can help improve communication skills.

LEARNING TO DELEGATE

As a rule, better managers always make it a practice to delegate when possible but also work alongside employees when necessary. Assigning a task and returning to the office to watch through a window and scowl is not managing. When employees see the company leadership involved and ready to work with tasks, such

as building a hunting gear display at the entrance or erecting an end cap of trail cameras, most employees see this as active management. As a rule, employees are more willing to roll up their sleeves and complete tasks when they know the action of their manager relays the clear message that this project is important. Leading by example is a powerful management technique.

Delegating is difficult when it is your company or you are responsible for everything within the walls. Employees often see managers who arrive while they are supposed to be away on vacation as someone who does not believe in them, and this action can create a wedge between managers and employees. Trust those you have hired and remember that you cannot do everything.

Another way to learn to delegate is to ask for volunteers to complete projects and then step away. This disconnection period could be a good time to go check on your competitors or to run errands or attend off-site seminars. Yes, someone will need to be in charge of the entire retail center in your absence, but some employees will be so involved in the tasks they have accepted that they may not recognize you are away. You can do this delegation process in short periods and build it into longer periods, such as that entire week of vacation you are needing and keep promising yourself and your family.

As a rule: delegate when possible, assign when needed, and always lead by example. Innovative managers soon recognize that effectively and fairly managing those who report to them is their top priority. All of the business tasks and projects will fall into place when your management style works. Don’t, however, fit into a stereotype manager mold. Be innovative. **HR**





↑ Hats and shirts are classics and turn your customers into walking advertisements. Don't cheap out on materials; you want to give away gear people will actually wear.

Customers Love to Get Free Stuff, Right?

It's time to evaluate whether the pens, key chains and other promotional items you hand out convert to new business for your company.

BY JUDY KNEISZEL

Every now and then, when I want to measure a kid's height or retrieve change that somehow found its way under my clothes dryer, I reach for a yardstick emblazoned with the name of a hardware store that closed more than 20 years ago. The yardstick itself is probably more than 30 years old.

This handy measuring and reaching tool is a testament to the long shelf life of promotional advertising items, sometimes called premiums, specialty items, or in modern slang, swag. When I look at my Thrifty Mac Hardware yardstick, I can't help but wonder if giving away branded items is still effective advertising in the age of social media.

This is a great question to ponder as you walk around the SHOT Show in January. Pay attention to which exhibitors are giving away freebies. Also note what is being given away. Are the booths with the free stuff more crowded? Does item quality matter? Do some items seem highly sought after? And check the trashcans on the way out to see if advertising premiums exhibitors paid dearly for are being tossed before the recipients even leave the floor. Also notice if any tote bags, T-shirts or promotional items from previous years are making a return visit.

FUN WITH FREEBIES

At an event like a trade show, promotional items seem to pull people into a booth and can be great conversation starters. Ever hear an attendee with an arm-load of stuff ask another attendee where they got that convenient reusable shopping bag they are sporting? That bag is working overtime to send people to a specific exhibitor's booth.

If you're still not sure how effective promotional items can be, look around your home and office when you get back from the show. How many items do you use every day with another company's logo on them? Which items are the most useful to you, and does having the item increase your likelihood of doing business with the company who gave it to you?

Promotional items certainly last longer than radio and TV advertising. And while we warn our kids that anything posted on social media is accessible on the internet forever, you have to look harder for an old Facebook post than a branded pad of sticky notes on your desk.

Some businesses use promotional items as a thank-you to current or past customers. Others give them out to any potential customers. Some companies



give their branded items away like candy, just setting out a bowl of pens and letting anyone grab as many as they want, while others have employees use the items themselves and hand them out judiciously as part of the sales process. Step one is to determine the audience you are buying promotional items for, and why.

SMART CHOICES

The next step is deciding what to give away. If you are considering purchasing branded promotional items, here are some tips to keep in mind:

Choose something useful. While usefulness is in the eye of the receiver, I'm guessing in 2023, few people have use for a paperweight. Fewer smokers and higher fire safety standards have made advertising lighters almost obsolete. Anything related to CDs is outdated, since most new cars don't have CD players and laptops don't have CD drives these days. And those USB drives that became a hot handout a few years ago may still be useful today, but may be on their way out as more and more people use cloud storage.

On the useful side, everyone has hands, lips and a nose — and lip balm,



tissue packets and small lotions can be purchased with a company logo on the package. These items can be kept in a desk drawer, glove box or purse, reminding the recipient of your company for months.

Choose something interesting. A pen, while useful, might seem ordinary, but once you start shopping you'll realize that there are pens in all shapes, sizes and colors. Some feature a clip to attach the pen to a purse or backpack. Some pens are bendy or have a unique texture, while others include fun tops users can fidget with. There are even pens that come with a stylus on one end to

keep the user's smartphone or tablet screen smudge free. Speaking of smartphones, branded phone cases might not be well received, since devices come in a variety of sizes and shapes.

Choose an item that represents your company. For a funeral home to give out something frivolous like a Frisbee or a kazoo would be odd, to say the least. A pet store giving out Frisbees or a music store with their logo on plastic kazoos make sense.

“Don't dismiss the classics. A T-shirt is a walking billboard, and pens can change hands many times before they run dry.”

A free promotional item doesn't have to relate directly to the industry you are in. Just don't leave recipients scratching their heads and saying, “Well, that's odd,” when they receive an item with your company name on it.

Consider delivery. Before you order that really cool ceramic coffee mug or oversized golf umbrella with your company logo on it, consider how you are going to be distributing these gifts. A refrigerator magnet is cheap to mail; a coffee mug is not. Is there room in your van or suitcase to take 1,000 water bottles to a local gunshow, or would something smaller and lighter work better?

Go for shelf life. Speaking of water bottles, make sure you are getting enough bang for your buck when you decide to give something away. Sure, parade goers in your town may appreciate a cold bottle of water with your company name on its custom printed label, but it's a one-time-use item. A refillable water bottle, on the other hand, can be used (and seen) for years.

Don't dismiss the classics. A T-shirt is a walking billboard, and pens can change hands many times before they run dry. Just remember, cheapest isn't always best. Consider what something of poor quality says about your business, and how it's unlikely someone will use a cheap item even once. A good quality shirt can promote your business for years. One that shrinks the first time it is washed might be used to wash a car one time. Giving away cheap throwaway trinkets adds plastic to the waste stream, whereas an item with a useful life gives your company a more environmentally responsible image.





Selling Crossbows to the Rifle Crowd

Looking to expand what you offer the gun crowd? Crossbows are the next logical step.

BY ACE LUCIANO

Operating a retail store is full of challenges, not the least of which is deciding what product lines to carry. Will you be more “specialty” focused, or will you carry a huge variety? At the end of the day, though, the most important thing is your bottom line.

In previous articles, I have spoken of the only three ways to make more money in your business: gain new customers, sell more to your existing customers, or raise your prices. Those are your only options to increasing revenue.

The easiest method, by far, is to sell more items to your existing customers. This topic is worthy of its own article, or even books written about it.

To that end, there is an excellent product line that offers a wide range of high-margin products, as well as an entire line of accessories, many of which you may already be carrying, but, certainly, many more that are easily compatible with your gun store business: Selling crossbows to your rifle-shooting crowd. It’s a perfect fit, because the gun hunters are already your customers, and crossbows are

a much easier step into the archery market for the end-user than traditional bows are.

The crossbow market has grown exponentially over the past decade. With more and more states offering the ability to hunt during the archery season without a disability permit or special permission, a large number of your potential customers have already taken the step from rifle to crossbow. But don’t worry — there are plenty more out there.

Crossbow technology, similar to archery technology in general, has

made leaps and bounds forward over the years. New and more advanced products come out every year. Today’s crossbows are capable of speeds in the 400 to 500 fps range, and are shorter, lighter and more maneuverable than those of the past. The sky is the limit as to design, variety, and the ever-important and almighty dollar when it comes to crossbows.

Since you already cater to hunters, there is a big advantage to offering crossbows to your gun crowd. First, as mentioned above, using a crossbow now gives hunters the ability to ex-





tend their hunting season. Traditional firearm seasons for big game tend to be short in many states. Some are as short as a long weekend. With a crossbow, your customers will now have the option to participate during their state's archery season (in many states), which, typically, is months long. Additionally, many of the archery permits for big game do not have to be drawn by a resident. In my home state of Arizona, which only offers crossbows to people with a disabled permit, there is a "Gen" deer permit available over the counter for residents. It is also much easier to draw an archery permit in many of the trophy designated areas than it is a rifle permit.

Another advantage to the crossbow is that it can generally be used in areas that are closed or unsafe for utilizing a firearm. Many suburban areas of the country do not allow firearms to be discharged, but hunting

with a bow and arrow, or crossbow, is perfectly fine and safe.

There are many more places and opportunities to shoot a crossbow than there are a rifle.

Rifles require space. Crossbows make no noise and require a lot less space, sometimes as little as your own backyard. Can't shoot in your yard due to local ordinances? A short trek to any open area that you gain permission to use and a portable target are all that's needed. If your store has a range, you can easily convert it over to be crossbow-friendly with the addition of a few portable targets.

Crossbow bolts/arrows are also reusable many times, unlike bullets or shot, giving your customers yet another reason to experience them.

Another bit of good news for the consumer is that, due to the competitive nature of the marketplace today, the overall price of outfitting yourself with a crossbow setup is significantly

less than it was even several years ago. A great example of this is Barnett Crossbows' new Hyper Raptor that sends a micro-diameter bolt down-range at 410 fps and sells for a retail price of \$599.

There are lots of options at the lower end of the crossbow price range from many manufacturers.

At the other end of the spectrum, Ten Point's new Flatline 460 has a reverse draw design with an overall length of only 26.5 inches, a speed rating of 460 fps, and an out-the-door price north of \$2,500.

The good news for your business is that means there are options for everyone, regardless of budget. You have the opportunity now to sell more and different items to the customer who buys a Remington 700 and then a couple of boxes of ammo every season and also to the custom rifle crowd whose rifles cost multiples of thousands of dollars and whose

ammo costs a few bucks every time they pull the trigger.

INCLUSION-FRIENDLY

Much like shooting a firearm, shooting a crossbow allows someone who is differently abled to be on the same level of skill and ability as someone who is not. Inclusion and opportunity to interact with other shooters, and, perhaps most importantly, the opportunity to have an activity, participate in competition(s) with non-disabled people (something that many in that market desire and at the same time is sorely lacking) is something that many people with physical challenges are looking for. Those people also have friends, family and numerous connections who will want to do business with the same people their friends do. It is also an opportunity for you to reach yet another group of customers who are likely going to buy something. Why not from you?



EASY TO LEARN

The good news for you and your business is that crossbows are easy to learn. Anyone who has shot a rifle or shotgun can easily learn a crossbow. This is somewhat different from making the switch from the firearms world to the traditional archery world, where a physical pull is required each time you want to fire an arrow. The method of firing, posture, sighting and muscles used are entirely different. The same skills required for shooting a rifle are similar to those of shooting a crossbow. Stability, trigger control, and sight picture in both open sights and through an optic are the same (or at least very, very similar.)

**THE REAL MONEY MAKER:
ACCESSORIES**

Up-sells are a way for you to easily to add to your bottom line. Your staff should be trained to offer at least two or three up-sell items to every customer who walks into your store. A new crossbow shooter is similar to a new rifle shooter. There are hundreds of additional products, devices, and accessories available for them to buy...from you.



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First, the obvious: they will need arrows and target points. They will need a target to shoot at. A crossbow can require a more substantial target than even the fastest modern archery equipment needs. They will need both rail lubricant and specialized crossbow string wax, as a properly waxed string lasts a great deal longer and prevents unintended damage to the string, the crossbow, and the bolts. Many crossbows have their own add-on items available that are practically a necessity, such as cranking devices that make it easier to cock today's heavier-draw bows. Specialized optics like red-dots and specialized crossbow scopes are also available and might make for a quick up-sell.

If your customer plans to use their new crossbow for hunting, they will need broadheads, a quiver, and perhaps some new hunting apparel like warm-weather clothing, hats and boots, as most archery seasons occur in warmer weather.

Crossbows also require some specialized equipment to adjust and repair, even for the regular replacement of strings. They will be more likely to come back to the person that sold them everything for those services, so if you can, equip your store and train your employees to service the bows you sell at a basic level, at least. **HR**

Photo: Realtree Media



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Wingshooting Ammo Old and New

With so many options on the market these days, how do you guide waterfowl hunters to the right load for their needs?





BY DAVID REARICK

Sorting through boxes of wingshooting ammunition can often lead to head-scratching and a lot of ifs, whens, and what-nots by both the seller and the buyer. With rifle ammunition, buyers generally have a very specific brand, weight and bullet type in mind, and if you don't have it, they will likely move on. On the other hand, for those in search of wingshooting ammunition for clay targets, small game or waterfowl, specifics like shot size, shot type, length, and even the load weight are all up for debate. The good news is, in most cases, if you can speak the language, you can make the sale based on the impact of the ammunition for the customer's use case even if it isn't what the buyer has used before.





To talk like an expert, every salesperson should be armed with some basic knowledge, including the differences between shot sizes, shell length, load ounces, high/low brass, and speed. The good news is that all boxes of wingshooting ammunition have the details on the box — you just need to know what they mean to be convincing.

This is information you probably already know, but just in case you're a new sales associate or more of a rifle guy who hasn't paid much attention to shotgun shells...

Shot size: To help arm you with the critical knowledge, common shot sizes range from effectively T (the largest) down to No. 9 (the smallest). Simply, you wouldn't hunt doves or quail with T shot, just like you wouldn't want to hunt Canada geese with No. 9s. Effectively, the smaller the bird, the smaller the shot size, and then in reverse to the largest of waterfowl, with most mid-size games like pheasant or ducks requiring shot sizes of No. 2 through No. 4.

Shell length: The maximum is always dictated by the firearm type

and model. For 12-gauge, there are 2¾-, 3- and 3½-inch. For 20-gauge, you'll find 2¾- and 3-inch; 28-gauge, 2¾- and 3-inch; and for .410 bore, 2½- and 3-inch. To begin, the longest shell a person should buy is, obviously, the longest one their gun will except. Beyond that, longer shells have larger payloads, sometimes faster speeds, but also more felt recoil. While 12-gauge 3½-inch loads have a large payload, they also kick like a mule. This added recoil decreases the shooter's recovery speed, and while the extra shot may help make up for a slightly off-target aim, subsequent shots are more rushed because it simply takes longer for the hunter to acquire their next target. You can shoot a shorter shell than your gun's maximum, but not a longer one.

Load ounces: This is an important, and often overlooked, aspect of every shotshell. Longer length shells typically have larger loads, but there is also variation in load size within the same shell length. What it comes down to it, picking the right ammunition is a balancing act between loud ounces, speed and pressure. There is a

↑ Options abound. Some buyers will go as cheap as possible, while some are looking for the best they can buy. Stock options in different price points.

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 maximum amount of pressure a shotgun hull and shotgun can handle, so to increase speed, generally speaking, the ounces of shot load are lighter to increase the delivery speed. More ounces equates to greater pattern density but also may require a user to adjust their lead slightly to make up for slower shot speeds. Some hunters like them fast, others like them slow and dense, so it really comes down to the buyer. In a pinch, a 1/8-ounce of shot more or less isn't a dealbreaker.

High vs. Low Brass: The brass has little to do with it, but what it does indicate is a higher powder charge and thus higher speed. Most low-brass shells are intended for the smallest of game species and clay targets.

Speed: We have all heard the saying "speed kills." While that may be true, the real reason is the law of kinetic energy, which is effectively mass times velocity. If you have the



← Federal is making upland ammo in the now-niche 16-gauge.

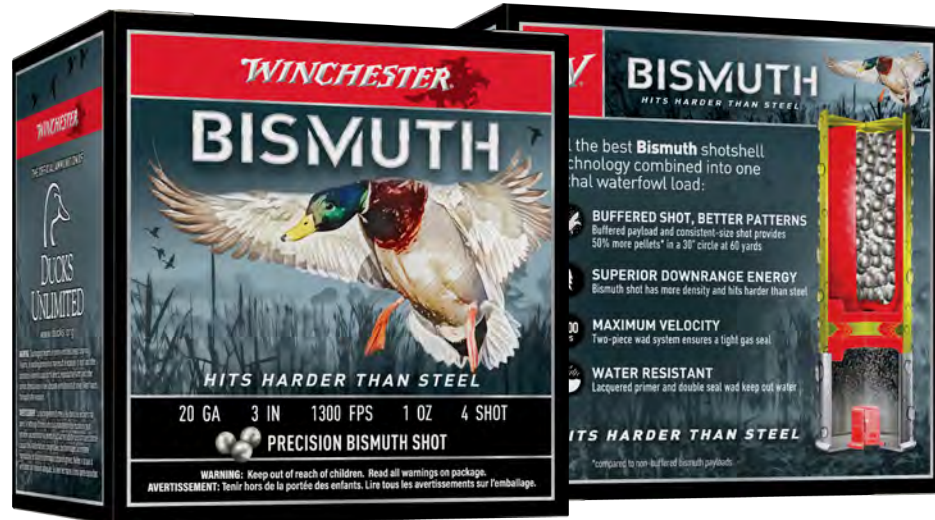


→ Steel isn't the only non-toxic alternative. Stock some bismuth, tungsten and maybe even some hybrid blends.

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same shot size with the same density, with one moving at 1,550 fps and the other at 1,750 fps, the 1,750fps load will have more energy, thus creating more knockdown power. In some cases, that energy is important, while in other cases, for instance on smaller game, it may be more important to have a higher pattern density that can be achieved by increasing the ounces of load thus decreasing the speed. Oh, and that other saying about "equal and opposite" reactions also applies. If you move the same amount of load ounces at different speeds, the one with the higher speeds will certainly add some kick on the back end.

When it comes to selling wing-shooting ammunition, there are a few basic questions/qualifiers. What is the quarry, what is the range, and what is the time of year they will be used? While the first two questions are rather straightforward, the latter is a little more complicated. In the simplest term, as the length of the days shorten, the density of most birds' plumage increases. For waterfowl, outer feathers essentially remain the same, but the down underneath densifies to combat the cold. This densification is why, for instance, many waterfowlers switch from No. 2 shot in September/October to BBs in December and January for Canada geese. The 2s give a better pattern density, but the BBs provide greater knockdown power that is needed for late-season honkers.



DOVES AND QUAIL

Typically, smaller shot sizes are used because of the higher shot volume per shell. For instance, a No. 8 1-ounce lead load will have approximately 410 pellets, while 1 ounce of No. 2s will only have 87. For fast fliers and smaller body sizes, having more pellets is better to fill in the "holes" within the pattern. The law of kinetic energy dictates that the smaller pellets at the same relative speed will have less energy, but that isn't a problem for most hand-sized quarry. Low-brass shells work well here, but high-brass shells generally have a higher powder charge for increase speed, which can be important for hunting fast fliers.



WATERFOWL

Since the nationwide ban on lead shot for waterfowl in 1991, finding a suitable, hard-hitting, replacement has been every waterfowl hunter and ammunition manufacturer's goal. Simply put, initial steel loads that came out as replacements for lead were lackluster, to say the least. They were low density and just didn't have enough oomph to break through the dense feather structure of waterfowl, even at decoying distances.

Since those days, steel has greatly improved, but so has the selection of alternative non-toxic ammunition. Ammunition, including shot made from bismuth, tungsten, and other hybrid blends has improved the performance of waterfowl ammunition, but also at a steep cost. While the search for a lead equal, both in cost and performance, is still a work in progress, there are multiple quality options that put the wallop back in waterfowl ammunition.

Puddle Ducks: Typically shot sizes No. 2-4 are used for most waterfowl. Sizes No. 5 and No. 6 are more than adequate for species like teal and wood ducks, with No.



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← Non-lead options are in increasing demand among upland hunters.



4's being a good bet for a mixed-bag hunt. Later-season hunters should start to move towards No. 2 shot for best results.

Geese: For most goose species, #2 is a preferential shot sizes, especially in the early season. Some hunters will prefer BB and even T if they are hunting big Canadas, and/or switch to larger shot sizes once the birds start filling out in December. For species like snow geese or other "little" goose species, #2's are good all year round. (HINT: For snow goose hunting, typically a lot of shells are used. Most hunters are less concerned with the brand, and more concerned with the price point, as some days many cases of shells can be fired out of one blind but only a few hunters)

Sea Ducks: Sea ducks are notoriously robust birds. No. 1 or 2, or a hybrid No. 2x4, are good load choices, with some hunters preferring BB shot sizes, especially for coastal eiders. These birds are deceptively fast, so many hunters opt for faster shot speeds over higher ounces.

Other Small Game: Birds like pheasants, grouse and other species typically require No. 4 through 6s, typically of the high-brass variety. These shot sizes are good for these robust species while offering a good



balance between energy and pattern density. The 2¾-inch shells are typically more than adequate.

THE BRANDS

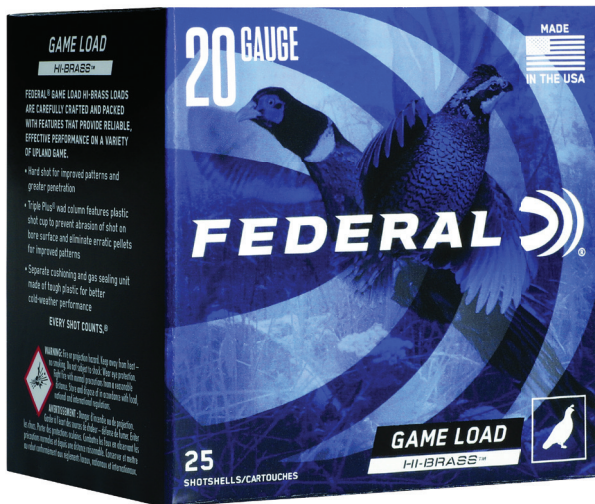
There are so many quality shotshell brands out there that picking just one is difficult. To help sort them out, the following is a summary of a handful of popular brands, their specialties,

and their hottest offerings.

Aguila: Produces a quality line of standard and high-velocity lead game loads at a good price point. Perfect for upland bird species and doves/pigeons.

Apex Ammunition: Offers a robust line of non-toxic loads for waterfowl, including straight S3 steel, a TSS (Tungsten Super Shot),

and a TSS/S3 blend in 12-, 20- and 28-gauges. Price points vary depending on the type, but the TSS/S3 blend is a nice compromise between high-performance loads and steel at a good price point. These bends are great for mixed-bag hunts and specialty hunts. Apex also produces a nice line of non-toxic TSS upland bird loads, which is especially im-



← Federal has a huge selection of shells in most gauges.

"We've all heard the saying 'speed kills.' While that may be true, the real reason is the law of kinetic energy, which is effectively mass times acceleration. ... Oh, and that other saying about 'equal and opposite reactions' also applies."





↑ Remington Ammunition will continue to sell well to brand enthusiasts and hunters looking for solid value.

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portant in states that have outlawed the use of lead shot across the board.

BOSS Shotshells: Boss has a full line from .410 all the way up to 10-gauge using their non-toxic copper-plated BOSS shot. This unique offering is a step above standard steel waterfowl loads but at an attractive price point. They offer a lot of variety in shot ounces and sizes and come in a unique cloth bag that sure beats a cardboard box that disintegrates when wet.

Federal Ammunition: Federal manufactures a full line of shotshells for everything from sporting clays up to waterfowl and beyond in all gauges. They also offer everything from lead to steel to tungsten and hybrid shotshells. Their Hybrid Black Cloud TSS ammunition combines not only

lethal TSS with steel to keep the price point reasonable, but it also is made up of a hybrid shot combination including mixes of BB and No. 7s or No. 3 and No. 9s for 12-gauges. This hybrid combination packs a lethal punch, combining great pattern density with significant knockdown power.

Hevi-Shot: Well known for their

→ Hevi-Shot, now owned by Vista Outdoor, the parent company of Federal, is a waterfowling favorite.

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original offerings, Hevi-Shot sells a wide variety of waterfowl and upland bird loads in everything from Hevi-Steel to Hevi-Bismuth with a mixture of everything in between. Their Hevi-Steel is an improved version of conventional steel shot with a density of 7.8 g/cc. It creates improved kinetic energy by delivering higher shot load ounces at high speed and



is available in .410 up to 10-gauge. If you are looking for anything from steel to tungsten, Hevi-Shot has a wide variety of loads for all species.

Kent Cartridge: Kent maybe best known in the waterfowl community for their Fasteel and Tungsten Matrix offerings, but they also offer bismuth non-toxic waterfowl loads. Additionally, they have a full line of upland ammunition, including everything from FastLead to bismuth. All of their ammo is available for the most common gauges, 12 and 20, with some offerings available for scarcer gauges like 16. Their Tungsten Matrix is well-known to be a performer for waterfowl, and their plated Fasteel 2.0 hits hard at an attractive price point.

Remington: Big Green manufactures a full line of waterfowl and upland bird shotshells in many configurations and gauges. For upland birds, the line Nitro Pheasant line packs a punch even in a 2¾-inch length. Their HyperSonic steel leaves the barrel at a blistering 1,700 fps, hits hard on both ends, and helps improve the energy of lower density steel shot. They sell ammunition at various price points for nearly all situations.

Winchester Ammunition: Winchester sells a very comprehensive line of shotshell ammunition, with their most famous maybe being the AA. While the AA is great for clays, it is also excellent for smaller upland game and is a proven performer. Their Blind Side steel shotshells have gained a lot of popularity. Unlike conventional shot that is round, Blind Side uses stacked Hex shot to improve pattern density and increase trauma on impact. It also has a high packing density, with up 15% more pellets per hull. They also offer a new Winchester Xpert Snow Goose at a great price point for those who need to buy in a mass quantity. **HR**



Lighter, Tighter and Rechargeable

Your shoppers do more than just hunt. What else are they doing recreationally that requires gear you should stock?

BY JOE KELLER

To state the obvious, hunters are outdoorsy people by nature. That means most of them need outdoorsy gear that isn't necessarily hunting-focused — like camping gear. Whether they're spending weeks in a canvas-tent spike camp pursuing elk out West or just taking the kids on weekend camping trips in a pup tent, many of your customers are the camping type. And they need gear.

A few trends are emerging in the camping world. After talking with retail-shop owners, managers, buyers and campers in several demographics,

three topics continually emerged: lighter, rechargeable and more compact gear.

"People my age want compact gear, like popups or truck toppers," said Phil Kelly, 37, of Barnstable, Massachusetts. Kelly said his Coleman popup fits easily on his property when not in use and doesn't burn an exorbitant amount of fuel. But his preference for compact flows into all his gear.

"I can't pinpoint what compact gear is so important to us," he said. "But it has to do with the aesthetics and the fact it's just easier to stow and

travel with."

The rabid camper and his wife have two young children, so all the gear they take up and down the East Coast needs to be tucked away. That's why he has a gravel bike he mounts onto his SUV and packs a foldable baby bike travel so his kids can come along. Did I mention the portable toilet? It's crucial, said his wife.

Kelly also swears by his Maratec survival lantern that does double duty as a low-illumination camp lamp as well as a 720-lumen torch when needed. And he'll take the rechargeable batteries, please.

John James of Native Summit in Oklahoma agreed the "compact" movement is a trend, and he sees it in his customer preferences. But he also added a variation: multi-use. If a customer can get more out of one piece of gear, it makes it an easier sell. We're not talking Swiss Army knife kind of multi-use, but more like using a camp chair at a soccer game, or a hammock for the trail as well as the backyard. This spill over into clothing and trail shoes as well.

"The idea is, people like to surround themselves with quality items that work," said James. "And



they're not getting that everywhere they shop, but they can here. If I can make them see the multiple uses, and that they don't have to buy two similar items, it can make all the difference in a sale."

Although they don't fit the same corporate demographic as most of the brands in the hunting space, outdoor brands like Patagonia and The North Face are designed to work really well in extreme conditions. Often they have lifetime warranties. They stand behind their products with research and proof.

"The customer might think, 'If someone uses this to climb Denali, then I could use it every day, yet it doesn't make me look like some outdoor techie,'" said James. This perspective regarding selling gear has helped James succeed at this store on the north side of Oklahoma City.

POWER OF ATTRACTION

Another trend is power, or specifically, rechargeable power.

Drew Voos, general manager at sporting goods store in Colorado, said they're selling fewer and fewer lithium and alkaline batteries and bringing in more and more rechargeables and battery-charging banks. Voos of Garrettson's in Greeley said Nebo is an emerging brand that

people are asking for. Nebo is known to produce high-quality, non-battery rechargeable flashlights and charging devices. They range from as much as \$325 for the 525-lumen Luxtreme to \$25 for the 500-lumen Mycro headlamp.

Kim Strickland, an avid camper-mom from Georgia, said never again, when it comes to regular old batteries.



"I was so tired of trying to find batteries that would work and fit our headlamps," said Strickland, who camps with her husband and four boys in the Blue Ridge Mountains in their lightweight trailer. "I said, 'Enough of this,' because they are so bad for the environment, and there are so many sizes. We went all rechargeable, and it's so much better."

Of course, the power banks are especially popular as connectivity via phone, laptop or other devices continues to rise.

LIGHTER AND LIGHTER

Another trend — lighter — is seen from car campers to RV'ers to backcountry hunters.

Hunters who camp in the Rocky Mountains carry a fair amount of gear on their backs: rifle, ammo, and a hefty backpack that's rigid enough to strap on 75 pounds of elk meat for the successful walk



stantially, said Voos. "It's real meat, and there is much less sodium."

Tyler Quitt, manager of Black Bird Sporting Goods in Medford, Oregon, said his customers are not always out for the latest and greatest. In fact, they trend toward the tried and true, despite weight, bulk or even if it takes disposable batteries. Black Bird has been around at this location near the Rogue River since 1962, so they are doing something right. Yet, they are always testing the waters, nonetheless.

"It's hard not to be swayed by the hot, new gear you see at the shows," said Quitt. "But if we see something that we think our customers might like, we don't go all in. We test the waters."

When paddleboarding started getting popular years ago, Black Bird customers were not interested. Black Bird carried a few, but it was not until only about three years ago that they started to sell.

"We're about four years behind the trends here," said Quitt, who does a lot of A-B testing and closely watches the inventory trends.

Yet, now you'll find a whole aisle of premium YETI gear, plus Klymit as well as the old standard, Coleman. Quality HydroFlask shares some space with old-timey Coghlan's accessories. The timeless brands make up the bread and butter, and the newer brands are the sex appeal.

Black Bird buyers have a blue-collar plan that works. But — guess what? — lately you'll find more compact, lighter and rechargeable gear in its aisles. **HR**

← Stock a variety of tents, from canvas wall tents for elk camps to small pup tents for a parent-and-child weekend camping trip.



out. They've been moving toward carbon fiber for years to help lighten the load. Of course, campers have also known the carbon-fiber benefits, but it seems there is more interest in products that substitute carbon fiber for steel or even aluminum.

Voos said he is seeing more and more carbon in rifle barrels and stocks, packs, down to trekking poles.

"That's a big deal to shave ounces off your gear as well as keeping up with the Joneses," he said.

Retailers mentioned seeing a resurgence even in lighter food, specifically freeze-dried packets. One company's name, Peak Refuel, came up several times as one that is growing in popularity, while the classic box-store brands seem to be on the decline. Peak Refuel's heaviest meal is just 6.35 ounces.

In the last four or five years, Peak Refuel's shelf space has grown sub-





A Waterfowler's Most Wanted

From calls to waders, this is the gear hunters must have.

BY JARROD SPILGER

Within the hunting fraternity, waterfowlers are notorious for accumulating large amounts of gear. That's because pursuing ducks and geese is both a labor- and gear-intensive pastime. It only makes sense, then, that retailers cater to this passionate group of hunters who are prone to buying lots of stuff during the long waterfowl season and even longer off-season.

The following is a most wanted list of top gear for diehard waterfowlers.



Calls

Calling is an important component of waterfowling, and certainly one of the most enjoyable when done right. A call allows hunters to intimately interact with the ducks and geese they are trying to lure into shotgun range. The following five call-makers all have something in common: their calls are both effective and affordable.

PRIMOS

"Two of our most popular items are the Wench duck call and Honky Tonk goose call," said Matt Rice, marketing manager for Primos. "These two calls are always a consumer hit and move fast."

The Wench duck call features patented "Tone Ridges" and "Tuning Ditches" integrated into the sounding board, which helps keep the reeds from sticking or freezing together in cold weather and produces a raspy tone, regardless of volume. Best of all, the Wench is affordable and extremely easy to blow, making it a great choice for new duck hunters. Available colors include Mossy Oak Bottomland camo, yellow, or green.

The Honky Tonk is one of my personal favorite goose calls. I usually have a difficult time blowing short-reeds, but the Honky Tonk is extremely easy to blow, even for a short-reed-impaired caller such as myself. Even better is the fact that the Honky Tonk makes realistic honks, clucks, and moans that will effectively fool honkers. It comes in one color: basic black. www.primos.com



ZINK

The ATM Green Machine is one of Zink's best-selling duck calls. This double-reed mallard call features the Z-cut, a no-stick tone channel that prevents the reeds from sticking. I received an ATM Green Machine for joining Ducks Unlimited a few years ago, and it's been on my lanyard ever since, for several reasons. First, it's extremely loud, despite its compact size, which I really like because

it conveniently stashes in a pocket when the hunt is over. It's also incredibly easy to use. By merely blowing into the call, it automatically produces realistic duck sounds seemingly all on its own.

Another Zink top seller is the COD (Call of Death) goose call, an easy-to-blow short reed that allows even novice hunters to make realistic goose sounds. On that same note, I'd be remiss to not also mention the PC-1 (Power Clucker),

another Zink short reed that effortlessly makes goose music straight out of the box.

All of these Zink calls are offered in affordable options and a variety of colors. Many also come with an instructional DVD. www.zinkcalls.com

BUCK GARDNER

Buck Gardner duck calls have a well-earned reputation for effectiveness and affordability. I own several Buck Gardner calls, most of which were acquired as promotional gifts for joining conservation organizations like Ducks Unlimited and Delta Waterfowl. They're all easy to blow and sound extremely realistic.

Buck Gardner doesn't only work with conservation groups, though. General manager Adam Davis says the company gladly works with small retailers all across the U.S. He recommends stocking the following duck calls.

The Double Nasty is the cornerstone call of the Buck Gardner line. It's an extra-raspy double-reed that won't stick due to Spit Tech technology in the tone board. Other top sellers include the Cajun-style Mallard Magic double reed, the 6-in-1 Whistle that imitates drake mallard quacks and pintail whistles, and the Wood Duck Hammer that replicates the whines and squeals of woodies.

For honkers, Davis recommends the Canada Hammer, an easy-to-use short reed that has been a mainstay in the company's lineup for years. All of these Buck Gardner calls are incredibly affordable, retailing for \$30 or less. www.buckgardner.com

HAYDEL'S

Based out of Louisiana, Haydel's Game Calls is one of the nation's most notable call makers, and they love working with



small retailers. They also make some of my favorite duck calls. I have an old, beat up Haydel's Wood Duck Squealer that's still squealing, despite being lost in the marsh for a few weeks. After I found it, I simply picked it up, cleaned it off, and am still using it to this day. Another favorite is the Black Hole mallard call, a loud double-reed that is perfect for windy days. It's kind of my unofficial go-to duck call because it seems to frequently find its way onto my lanyard. However, it may get replaced this season by another Haydel's duck call that is quickly becoming a new favorite — the



Calls

Red Leg mallard call. Although, this simple-to-blow double-reed was designed to fool wary migratory "red legs" late in the season, there's no reason it couldn't just as effectively be used all season long; it's that good.

Another double-reed mallard call owner Rod Haydel suggests small retailers stock is the Deceiver, a basic duck call that is the company's top seller. The company proudly admits it was designed for winning "meat calling contests" (hunting), not competition calling contests.

For geese, top picks are the Blue & Snow Goose call, which is great for the spring conservation season, the Wide Bore Speck for calling whitefronts, aka

specklebellies, and the Magnum Honker, a larger version of the popular H-81 Canada Honker. Haydel's product catalog claims, "Five minutes of practice and you'll be huntin'!" I believe it. Within five minutes of picking up the Magnum Honker, I was able to make deep, realistic goose sounds with ease.

www.haydels.com

ECHO

With headquarters in the heart of Arkansas duck country, Echo Calls are American-made by hunters for hunters. "We do sell to small stores as well as large ones," pointed out founder Rick Dunn. "We have a Diamondwood call which is our best seller."



Featuring a wood barrel and polycarbonate insert, the Diamondwood double-reed duck call is easy to blow and perfect for new and old hunters alike. Its

soft pitch is designed for close-in finishing of ducks in timber. And starting at around \$65, this intermediate-level call won't break the bank.

"We also sell a lot of polycarbonate calls," noted Dunn. Echo's Poly Timber is another call designed for green timber hunting, with a realistic tone that sounds exactly like a duck. Plus, its tough polycarbonate construction will stand up to years of abuse. The Poly Timber is available in both single- and double-reed versions, and in a variety of colors that include bourbon, smoke and green. Retailing for around \$35 or less, this is a high quality call at an entry-level price. www.echocalls.com

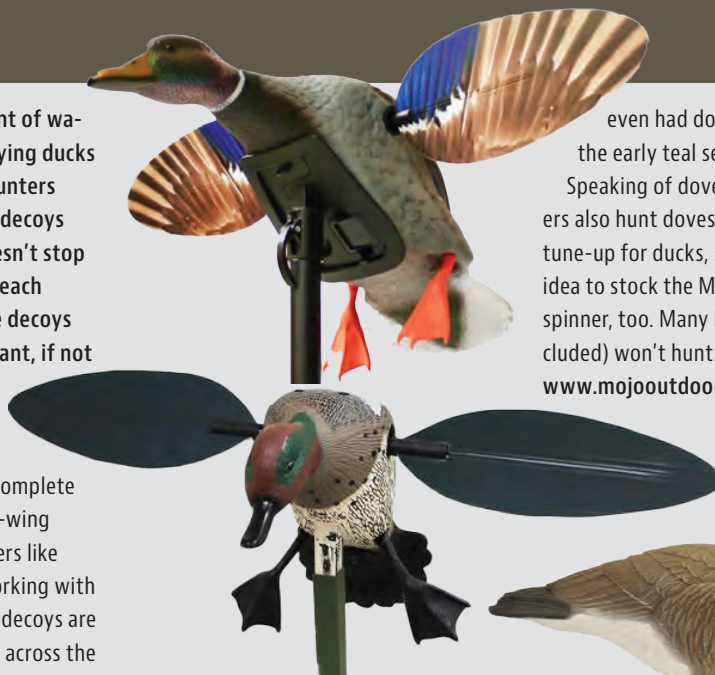
Decoys

Another enjoyable component of waterfowling is the art of decoying ducks and geese. Honestly, most hunters probably already have more decoys than they need, but that doesn't stop them (us) from buying more each season. Here are some of the decoys waterfowlers are going to want, if not need, this fall.

MOJO

A modern decoy spread isn't complete without at least one spinning-wing decoy, and no one does spinners like Mojo. The company enjoys working with retailers of all sizes, and their decoys are popular with waterfowlers all across the country.

You can't really go wrong with Mojo's Elite Series Mini Mallard, available with or without a remote. It's just a good, general-purpose spinner. Another effec-



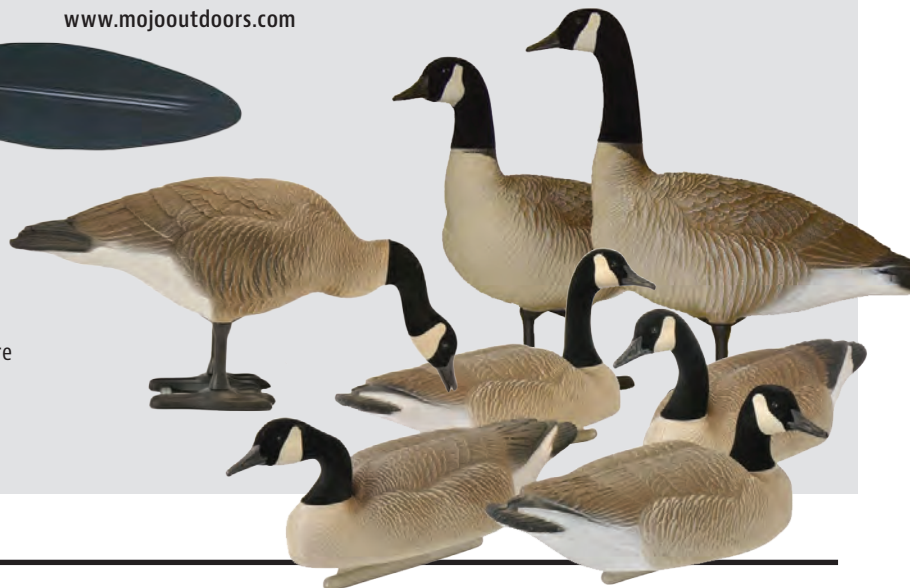
tive all-around decoy is the Mojo Teal. I've used this affordable spinner to lure in all types of ducks, including wood ducks last fall, despite the fact that it imitates a green-wing teal drake. I've

even had doves fly in to it during the early teal season.

Speaking of doves, many waterfowlers also hunt doves in September as a tune-up for ducks, so it might be a good idea to stock the Mojo Voodoo Dove spinner, too. Many hunters (myself included) won't hunt doves without one. www.mojooutdoors.com

BIGFOOT

Although Bigfoot Decoys offers duck decoys, it's the company's goose decoys that waterfowlers really want. "We work with a ton of smaller retailers who sell our flagship four originals — Standards, Feeders, Bulls and Floaters," said Bigfoot's Jeff Friedman.



Decoys

Those are the decoys he recommends retailers stock, since historically they're the most sought-after by goose hunters. Full-body options include the Standard 4-pack, which includes decoys in upright, sentry, active and resting poses, the Feeder 4-pack, which consists of all feeders, and the upright Bull 4-pack that comes with two Big Bulls and two Little Bulls in upright positions. The Canada Floater 4-pack has upright, resting, sentry and shortneck poses. All have flocked heads. The full-bodies feature Bigfoot's iconic oversized foot base that allows them to stand without the need for stakes — a big plus when the ground is frozen.

Friedman also suggests retailers stock Bigfoot's Work Station blind bags. They come in large, XL, and Extended Carry

sizes. The latter is essentially a backpack with a huge amount of carrying capacity and more pockets than you'll ever need. Although it's designed for carrying a laptop, who carries a computer in the field? Instead, I'm going to use it to pack up to six duck decoys into my remote hunting spots. For carrying birds out, another accessory item worthy of consideration is Bigfoot's ultra-durable Harvester game strap. www.bigfootdecoys.com

AVIAN X

When it comes to duck decoys, the folks at Avian X suggest small retailers stock their Topflight Fusion Mallards. Every six-pack of floaters comes with three drakes and three hens, each in a unique posture.



Another popular item is Avian X's Topflight Green-Winged Teal. Each six-pack includes four drakes and two hens in two different poses. The two hens come in resting and feeding poses, while the four drakes have two each in resting and feeding poses.

As for goose decoys, the top pick is

the Topflight Honkers four-pack of floaters. The goose hunting experts at Avian X designed these decoys in four unique postures and crafted them to be rugged and realistic with chip-resistant paint and flocked heads for years of use and abuse. www.avian-x.com

Chokes

Screw-in choke tubes are an important component in any hunter's arsenal since they allow quick customization of a shotgun's pattern to meet changing conditions. Having a wide selection of chokes in stock is a good idea since hunters are always looking to improve their shotgun's performance. Here are three of the most popular choke makers in the waterfowling world.

KICK'S

Kicks is one of the easiest companies to work with, and they make some of the best waterfowl chokes out there, including their High Flyer line that features radical porting on the extended portion of the tube. The ports serve two purposes: to grab and separate the wad from the shot column for better patterns, and to vent gases to reduce muzzle rise and felt recoil.

New for 2023 are High Flyers for Benelli's SBE3 28-gauge, which is currently enjoying a surge in pop-

ularity among waterfowlers. These small-bore chokes are available in improved cylinder, modified, and full.

Kick's also offers a line of non-ported Vortex waterfowl chokes in 10-, 12-, and 20-gauge for hunters who prefer the easy cleanup of a non-ported tube.

www.kicks-ind.com



CARLSON'S

Another top choke choice is Carlson's of Atwood, Kansas. Carlson's choke tubes can be found in sporting goods stores and gun shops both large and small throughout the Midwest and beyond. These chokes are popular because they are both effective and affordable. Ported and non-ported options are available, as well as various gauges.

For retailer convenience, Carlson's offers several display rack options pre-stocked with specific tubes. Stores catering to waterfowlers should consider the Cremator, Delta Waterfowl and Sporting Clays racks. The Cremator and Delta chokes come in three sizes — close, mid, and long range — while the Sporting Clays chokes come in a wider range of constrictions, ranging from cylinder to extra full.



All work well with non-toxic shot. www.choketube.com

BRILEY

Briley Manufacturing of Texas makes some of the shooting world's most popular target chokes and happily works with retailers of all sizes. The company also



Chokes

has a lot of hunting choke offerings, so it's wise to keep it simple when deciding which tubes to stock. For waterfowling, the folks at Briley say their Helix Hunter line is the best choice.

Helix Hunter choke tubes have an ex-

tra-long extended portion with helical porting for better pellet distribution and maximum recoil reduction. They come in three constrictions: short range for shots inside 25 yards, mid range for shots from 25 to 45 yards with non-toxic shot or 20

to 40 yards with lead shot, and long range for shots at 45-plus yards with non-toxic shot and 40 yards with lead. The long range Helix Hunter tube is my go-to choke for pass-shooting spring snow geese.

www.briley.com



Three Great Waders

Water is a big part of waterfowling. Experienced fowlers accept damp, adverse conditions as hazards of the sport. However, getting drenched is never any fun and can be downright dangerous in cold weather. A good wader can literally be a life saver when the temps drop. Keeping dry can mean the difference between safely staying in the marsh and hunting, or hurrying home to thaw out by a warm stove. Here are three brands whose products are designed to help keep waterfowlers comfortable and dry all season long.

SITKA

The Sitka Delta Zip Wader is considered by many waterfowlers to be the ultimate wader. It's the only Gore-Tex waterfowl wader and has a totally waterproof YKK Aquaseal zipper for easy on and off, as well as reinforced knees and shins for protection when busting through ice and brush. The insulated boot portion of the waders is made by LaCrosse and comes in a range of sizes.

Other features include adjustable, no-buckle suspenders, two water-resistant zippered storage pockets, and hand-warmer pockets. The Delta Zip Wader is available in Gore Optifade Waterfowl Marsh or Timber camo patterns, as well as solid color Earth (brown) which could also serve double duty as a fishing wader. Best of all, Sitka gladly works with retailers of any size. www.sitkagear.com

BANDED

Banded is another popular waterfowl brand that works with local retailers. In

fact, small shops are probably the largest retail segment Banded does business with and are considered to be a great outlet for the company's many products.

The folks at Banded say their most popular wader is the Redzone 3.0, which has a layer of protective reinforcement from the knee down. This breathable chest wader is available in both insulated and uninsulated versions and in a variety of colors, including Mossy Oak Bottomland, Realtree Max-7 or Timber, and Marsh Brown.

For those who, like myself, don't want or need a chest wader, Banded offers other options, such as the Redzone RZ-X 1.5 breathable and uninsulated waist wader, which is available in either Max-7 or Bottomland camo. I wore it while hunting sea ducks off the coast of Maine a few years ago and stayed nice and dry regardless of the conditions. www.banded.com

LACROSSE

LaCrosse is one of the top names in



hunting footwear, including waders for waterfowlers. "LaCrosse absolutely supports small shops, and that's a large part of their business," said Justin Moore who handles marketing for the company. Moore says a top pick is the Alpha Agility Select chest wader, available in Mossy Oak Bottomland, Realtree Max-5, and — new for fall 2023 — brown. Amenities include a front zipper that makes the wader easy to put on and take off and a zip-out liner for warm-weather fowling or fishing. The boot section is designed to provide the

agility and cushioning of an athletic shoe for all-day comfort.

In addition to waders, LaCrosse also offers a wide selection of hip boots, knee boots and hunting boots. For knee boots, Moore suggests the Alpha Agility or AlphaTerra Pro. The latter is now available in versatile brown as well as a variety of camo patterns. Some other top sellers are the Ursa hiking-style boot and the AlphaTerra rubber boot. www.lacrosse-footwear.com



Apparel

Waterfowl clothing serves two basic functions: keep hunters hidden and warm. The following jackets and pants are designed to do just that. They feature the latest in camouflage and insulation technology to ensure waterfowlers stay concealed and comfortable in all kinds of habitat and weather.

SITKA

As popular as the Delta wader is, Sitka's clothing line is even more popular, especially among waterfowlers. There are a lot of options, so if shelf space is limited, retailers might want to keep it simple and just focus on stocking the ever-popular Traverse and Dakota lines.

The Traverse line was recently updated in 2022, and all garments are now made from recycled materials that are even more comfortable and durable than before. The Traverse Pant features stretch fabric for an exceptional fit. The Traverse Cap prominently displays Sitka's logo and is extremely popular among hunters. The Traverse Hoodie, available in both men's and women's sizes, features Berber fleece for warmth and a structured hood with an integrated face mask. The full-zip Traverse Hoodie was sold out by early November at a local sporting goods store last season.

The half-zip Dakota Hoodie combines Gore-Tex Infinium and lofted fleece to provide the ultimate in windproof warmth. Likewise, the Dakota Pant is the warmest stand-alone pant I've ever worn.

All of these items are offered in Gore Optifade Waterfowl Marsh and Waterfowl Timber camo patterns. The Traverse



Hoodie is also available in white for snow goose hunters. www.sitkagear.com

BANDED

Banded has an extensive clothing line in addition to waders. One of Banded's most popular waterfowl apparel items is the Atchafalaya Pullover. This weather-resistant, hooded pullover features a quiet and windproof "Stealth Shell" exterior and a fleece interior. Camo patterns are Mossy Oak Bottomland or Habitat and Realtree Max7 or Timber.

Another popular Banded item is the Calefaction 3-in-1 Wader Jacket. It features a zip-out PrimaLoft insulated liner that can be worn either with the outer



shell or as a standalone jacket. Available colors include the above Mossy Oak and Realtree patterns, as well as Natural Gear camo and Marsh Brown. www.banded.com

GAMEHIDE

Gamehide is a respected brand that offers a wide range of hunting apparel, from blaze orange for big game and upland birds to camouflage for waterfowl. "We do sell to independent retailers across the country," assured Gamehide's Dave Larsen. "We're independent dealer-friendly and have no minimum order. We're one of the few hunting wear brands that offer clothing for all hunting categories, as well as for men, ladies, youth and even toddlers. We've been in business since 1994 and offer the latest in camo patterns, including



Mossy Oak and Realtree."

Larsen says a couple of Gamehide's best-selling waterfowl garments are the Marsh Lord Hoodie and the Slough Creek Jacket. The loose-fitting Marsh Lord Hoodie features a waterproof camo upper and warm fleece lower, making it a great choice for wearing under waders. Available patterns include Mossy Oak Bottomland and Shadow Grass Blades, as well as Flyway Camo.

The insulated Slough Creek Jacket is made of StormHide Gridiron fabric, which repels both rain and stickers. The jacket also features large cargo pockets for holding plenty of shells and fleece-lined hand-warmer pockets. Camo patterns include Bottomland, Shadow Grass Blades, Flyway, and Flyway North. www.gamehide.com



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How to Maintain Text Marketing Compliance

It's important you understand the benefits and complicated rules of text marketing.

BY PETER B. MATHIESEN

This recap will walk you through the key points of a March 20, 2023, video webinar presented by Ben Nelson, Founder of Otter Technologies. A recording of this webinar and past Firearm Industry Compliance Education sessions are available through NSSF's SHOT University™ Online — the firearm industry's premier resource for education and training — available for free to NSSF Members and their staff. Log in today at www.pathlms.com/nssf.

INCREASING YOUR MARKETING ROI

Text marketing offers an impressive return on investment of up to 25x, outshining old-school email's performance by a factor of 10x. At this moment in the firearm marketplace, only a fraction of brands and retailers use it, leaving significant revenue on the table.

FOLLOWING FEDERAL SHAFT REGULATIONS

It's important to familiarize yourself with the Cellular Telephone Industries Association-established S.H.A.F.T. (Sex, Hate, Alcohol, Firearms, and Tobacco) regulations. We want to ensure your text campaigns will not get flagged, have your number blocked and or get your company fined.

It's critical that any marketing through text follows federal law. Any retail or firearm company is responsible for the downstream user. If your company has discussed text marketing with a media company, make sure they have a clear understanding of the S.H.A.F.T. requirements. These rules are critical to successful campaigns with legal, secure and sound operations. Here are some of the basics.

UNDERSTANDING THE RULES: OVER 21 OPT-IN CAMPAIGNS

One vital issue to address: retailers and ranges are required to have an age-gated opt-in, and there are no exceptions. When a customer wants to communicate with the retailer, they must verify their age on their cell phone and accept the text. Age acceptance is 21 or over. Like other text marketing, the consumer must also understand the data rates may apply. Companies must also have a clear knowledge of the Opt-in, Opt-out, "Stop," and "Help" rules.



ESTABLISHING STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Even informal texting for simple tasks or services requires age verification. Sending a reminder text that the customer's ammo can be picked up or their shooting lane is ready requires a 21-plus age verification. It cannot be a yes or no answer; it must be communicated in a month, day and year format.

The system should only operate through the formal company's communication system. Even in states that have younger-than-21 firearm rules, the cell phone user must still be verified as over 21, and personally opt-in through their cell phone.

Retailers may be under the impression that their web disclaimers and/or age verification covers texting. However, it does not. Only an age-verified opt-in from the specific cell phone is acceptable.

IMPLEMENTING STOP AND HELP PROTOCOLS

As long as you have properly age gated and are using "Stop" and "Help" auto responses, you should be in good shape. Realize that as a company, you are responsible when a user responds with "Stop" or "Help." Stop requires you to terminate all consumer's active communication after he or she texts "Stop." "Help" requires you to offer additional contact via a toll-free number, or email address.

Texts that include hate speech, intention to incite violence or those of a threatening nature must follow a remove call to action.



SENDING TEXTS AT APPROPRIATE TIMES

In addition to age gating and speech, there are times you can send a marketing text and times when you cannot. According to the Telephone Consumer Protection Act, you cannot send a promotional text message during “quiet hours”—the time between 9 p.m. and 8 a.m. per the local consumer’s time zone.

Statistics have proven the best days of the week to text are Thursday-Saturday. The best times of the month are at the beginning and end, with the 13th being the best outlier. Mid-day at lunchtime is also considered to be an ideal time for most marketing texts.

Two-way communication can allow you to respond during different hours if the consumer texts you first.

Nelson recommends stores set up auto texting hours for specific times of the day. Frequently, they match the store’s hours. After business hours, the consumer can receive an automated response that the store will contact them the next day.

REGISTERING FOR A TEN-DIGIT LONG CODE

Registering for a DLC, Ten-Digit Long Code, with your text provider will significantly reduce your usage costs. The alternative is to use Short Code, which can have a higher delivery rate, but at a much higher cost. There are also limitations with two-way communication with Short Code. Registering with your provider can be rigorous. This necessary step could take several weeks.

Another issue is T-Mobile. This

cellular firm has not been accepting registration with companies that have firearms, ammo or guns in their names. They have made it clear; they are not accepting links to firearms and ammo promotion. An option is to work with a third-party carrier. To date, other national carriers have accepted industry texting.

STAYING CORPORATE: ELIMINATING PERSONAL CONSUMER TEXTS

Retailers and ranges should eliminate all personal texting to customers. While it feels convenient and a benefit to the consumer, maintain strict communication procedures. Having SOPs is paramount to guarding secure communication that follows cell phone regulations. Again, any texting must be age verified.

Although traditional communication methods, email and social media have a place in your marketing mix, text marketing is a strong addition. Adding this alternative is cost effective and highly measurable. Moreover, it offers a competitive advantage. Few firearms companies use it, and it offers a tremendous opportunity to gain new customers.

Text media companies are in every major market. Parlay their expertise to stay compliant and develop a program for your store or range’s marketing plan.

To learn more, we invite you to watch Otter Technologies Founder Ben Nelson’s detailed and helpful webinar on this subject at www.nssf.org/articles/2023-firearm-industry-compliance-education/. **HR**



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HUNTING RETAILER GEAR ROUNDUP

Arrows

Make sure your store or website is a one-stop shop for all of your patrons' arrow needs.

Archers can be fanatical when it comes to their equipment — forever on the lookout for that silver bullet that will elevate their game to new heights. When it comes to tweaking their rigs to boost efficiency, bowhunting guys and gals look for the accuracy, consistency and terminal performance that will elevate their game. Arrows are a good example.

There are two distinct camps when it comes to arrow selection. First, there are those speed freaks who proclaim that lightweight arrows fly faster with less arc, which leads to increased accuracy. And then there are muscle heads who prefer heavyweight arrows designed to deliver more energy — arrows that fly slower but resist wind better and penetrate deeper. Each is convinced their approach delivers the best possible results in the field.

Savvy archery retailers know there is no one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to arrows, and that's why they carry a wide selection to fit the wants and needs of every potential customer — that none leaves the store or website empty handed. Fortunately, today's retailer — and archery patrons — have a wide selection to choose from, regardless of whether they're considering new arrows for a compound bow or crossbow. Here are a few examples to put you on the road to more sales and your customers on the path to better shooting.

CARBON EXPRESS MAXIMA PHOTON SD

Carbon Express Maxima Photon SD premium hunting arrows (\$249.99/Per dozen shafts; \$134.99/six-pack fletched arrows) feature a terminal blend of strength, integrity, speed and tunability for hyper accuracy at all ranges, reduced wind drift and enhanced penetration. Fabricated from a custom weave of 30-ton carbon, the Photon SD boasts 25% faster recovery out of the bow than comparable models. When combined with patented Tri-Spine technology, this exclusive blend of materials and construction generates up to four times the accuracy of traditionally constructed single-spine arrows. The aircraft-grade 7074 aluminum premium half-out insert system comes with a standard threaded 21-grain insert that provides the ability to add weight to customize FOC to each user's preference. www.feradyne.com/carbon-express

EASTON SONIC 6.0 MATCH GRADE

Easton's Sonic 6mm shaft is now available in a Match Grade ± 0.001 -inch specification for bowhunters looking for precision and quality. The Sonic 6.0 (\$117.99/six-pack fletched) is built using Easton's seamless Acu-Carbon process for 100% weight and spine consistency from shaft to shaft, dozen to dozen. Lighter overall mass weight also provides for a wider range of arrow build options; from lightweight speed setups to high-FOC momentum-producing heavyweights. The Sonic 6.0 Match Grade features Easton's fletched helical construction combined with 2-inch Blazer vanes. It is available in six spines (250, 300, 340, 400, 500 and 600) and 6mm nocks are pre-installed. Easton's precision ST inserts are included for use with #8-32 thread broadheads and field points. www.eastonarchery.com

G5 OUTDOORS MARK SERIES PREMIUM

Mark series premium hunting arrows from G5 Outdoors (\$94.95/Mark 244/six pack; \$114.95/Mark 203/six pack) are precision machined and come in two models — Mark 203 and Mark 244 — with two different arrow diameter options. Mark series arrows are constructed with 100% high modulus carbon. A unique three-layer construction centers around a base layer with two layers of unidirectional carbon at 90 degrees. The mid-layer has two to four layers of unidirectional carbon at zero degrees, and the outer layer is a 3K woven carbon. Mark series arrows include G5 inserts and bushings that provide an enhanced fit that results in superior durability and performance, with 250, 300, 350 or 400 spine options available. www.g5outdoors.com





GOLD TIP PIERCE LRT

Built with Gold Tip's proven Pierce shaft and now with even tighter tolerances and upgraded components, the Pierce LRT (\$139.99/fletched six-pack) is the arrow maker's most advanced long-range tactical arrow ever. Its micro diameter allows for better penetration and less wind drift at extended ranges, and its component system is easy to install perfectly straight every time and is the toughest they have ever developed. In addition, Dyna-Slick-Shield coating aids in penetration and target removal. Pierce arrows are three-point laser sorted for a straightness tolerance of .001-inch and are available in three-fletch and four-fletch shafts (.166-inch diameter) with GTO nocks. www.goldtip.com

GOLD TIP
PIERCE LRT



VICTORY RIP-SS

The RIP-SS hunting arrow from Victory Archery (six-pack, fletched: Elite/\$234.99; Gamer/\$209.99; Sport/\$184.99) features a bone-crushing, small-diameter shaft with layers of stainless steel fused with an advanced 90° 3K carbon weave. Even lighter and faster than its predecessor, the Xtorsion, the RIP-SS boasts a higher FOC and incredible momentum for unmatched penetration and accuracy. The result is a lightweight arrow that's less affected by wind and capable of punching through anything in its path. Available in Elite, Gamer and Sport models, RIP-SS arrows have a straightness tolerance of $\pm .001$, $\pm .003$ and $\pm .006$ inches respectively, are available in 250, 300, 350 and 400 spines and come equipped with SHOK SS inserts and IP nocks. www.victoryarchery.com

VICTORY
RIP-SS

Hunting Broadheads

Cash in on these high-performance, game-busting broadheads.

For discriminating bowhunters who wish to obtain maximum accuracy and terminal performance, high-octane, game-busting broadheads are an integral component of the game-anchoring equation. Modern design, space-age materials and goal-oriented engineering combine to ensure broadheads will help any arrow fly straight and true and inflict the damage that will ensure a blood trail even a blind man could follow.

When it comes to broadhead selection, hunting retailers — and their bow-centric customers — have some choices to make based on their equipment and the types of hunting they do, beginning with basic designs and ending with specific personal preference. Fixed-blade and mechanical broadheads both have their attributes and their fans. Fixed broadheads, advocates say, are reliable, durable and extremely sharp; they cut on contact and there is no fear of mechanical failure. Those who prefer mechanicals point to their larger cutting diameters and field-point accuracy.

The wide range of available broadhead choices on the market makes it essential to have the most up-to-date models — and a working knowledge of each — available at your store or on your website in order to make sure customers make educated choices, and that means stocking up on the latest offerings from a wide array of companies. Remember, many of your patrons are brand loyal, and if you don't have what they want they will go elsewhere. The following broadheads provide a springboard to more sales.



BEAR ARCHERY RAZORHEAD VWS

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





ANNIHILATOR XL

The Annihilator Broadhead (\$62.99-\$66.99/pack of three) is engineered to fly like a field point and is nearly indestructible. It has a new shape that defines an evolution in broadhead efficiency. It is reusable and easy to sharpen and produces long-range accuracy. Made from a single piece of 4140 alloy steel hardened to a Rockwell RC 52 rating with 30-degree beveled edges for superior edge retention and durability, the broadhead fits most insert, halfsert or outsert systems that use a standard #8-32-inch thread pattern. Heads are match graded per pack, guaranteeing all three broadheads weigh within 0.2 grains of each other. They come in 100-, 125- and 150-grain weight options. www.annihilatorbroadheads.com



EASTON MATCH GRADE FIELD POINTS

New in the Easton Archery product lineup are its Match Grade Threaded Field Points (\$12.50/pack of six). These new premium practice points have been designed with attention to every detail. They feature an elongated tangent ogive shape, inspired by high ballistic coefficient bullets. This provides superior long-range accuracy and easier extraction from targets. Every point is precision machined from hardened steel, with a slick, dark-nickel coating for a mirror-like surface finish and offered in standard #8-32 threads in five popular diameters in 100- and 125-grain weights. A #11-32 version adds a 150-grain option to perfectly match 150-grain crossbow broadheads. Easton Match Grade Field Points are weight accurate to half a grain and concentric to a tolerance of one-half-thousandths of an inch. www.eastonarchery.com



INNERLOC CARNAGE

Expanding on Innerloc's Aero series, the Carnage Broadhead (\$49.06/package of three) has rear-deploying, razor-sharp blades that slice through its exclusive aerodynamic wrap, delivering down-range accuracy and massive hemorrhage. "Deadly by Design," this new Innerloc broadhead has what it takes to create carnage and will fly straight out of today's fastest bows and crossbows. It comes with wraps in multiple designs, or users can create their own. The 100-grain Carnage has a 1.5-inch cutting diameter and razor-sharp .040-inch blades. All Innerloc products are made in the USA. www.innerloc.com



MUZZY ONE

The Muzzy One (\$44.99/three pack) is an innovative approach to one-piece broadhead design, machined from a single piece of premium stainless steel. The hybrid chisel/cut-on-contact tip blasts through bone for incredible penetrating power, while precision positioned vents on the blades ensure accuracy. This solid 100-grain head features three deadly .046-inch-thick blades with a 1.125-inch cut. Honed to perfection, the dependable Muzzy One can be easily resharpened on a flat stone, ensuring it is not only easy to care for and effortless to tune, but also that it offers the performance and peace of mind bowhunters demand in the field. www.feradyne.com/muzzy-broadheads



QAD EXODUS

The Exodus Broadhead from Quality Archery Designs (\$42.99/pack of three) is 100% designed and manufactured in the USA, its revolutionary compact head providing the strength to bust through the toughest hide and bones. Utilizing Blade Over Shaft technology, the Exodus' cut-on-impact blades sweep back over the arrow shaft, creating a super-short, compact head, just like a field point — enhancing accuracy while producing extreme penetration and a large cutting diameter. Exodus Broadheads come in standard, crossbow and deep six versions — in 85-, 100- and 125-grain weights. They are available in two different blade styles — swept and full. www.qadinc.com



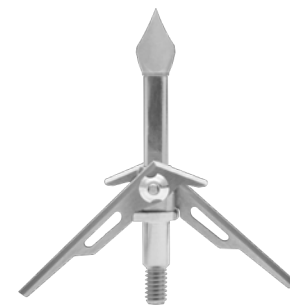
RAVIN TITANIUM

Serious bowhunters swear by the rear-deploying Ravin Titanium Broadhead (\$84.99/three-pack) — utilizing Ti6AL4V Grade 5 titanium and packed with features for ultimate penetration and performance. This 100-grain mechanical broadhead employs a single-piece ferrule and internal spring clip. There are no lock rings or O-rings necessary, providing hunters ease of use in the field. The blades deploy upon impact, producing a devastating 2-inch cutting diameter. The Ravin Titanium Broadhead is tested and approved for bows with speeds up to 500 fps. www.ravincrossbows.com



RAGE BROADHEADS WITH NC TECHNOLOGY

Rage Broadheads adds proven NC (No Collar) technology to three classic Rage designs (\$39.99/three-pack) — the original Rage 2-Blade, the Rage 2-Blade Chisel-tip and Rage Crossbow X broadheads in both 100- and 125-grain versions. The newly incorporated NC technology integrated blade containment system utilizes cutting-edge finger-like tabs on the blades' pivot point to "anchor" the blades in place while in the closed position. This technology eliminates the need for a shock collar, dental band or O-ring, while still providing a 100% reliable blade retention system. Each 2-blade version incorporates premium-grade aluminum ferrules and ultra-tough .035-inch thick and razor-sharp stainless-steel blades. www.feradyne.com/rage-broadheads



SIK SK2 TWO-BLADE EXPANDABLE

The SK2 Two-Blade Expandable Broadhead from SIK Broadheads (\$49.99/package of three) is designed for high-test hunting and lethal terminal performance on big game. It features FliteLoc technology to ensure its signature offset blade design will deploy on impact and create a gaping 2-inch offset entry wound with its large 3.625-inch cutting surface, while providing field-point accuracy. The 100-grain SK2 Broadhead provides silent, balanced and reliable flight because the offset blade design creates less surface and promotes improved flight characteristics. www.sikbroadheads.com





TRIFECTA BROADHEADS

Trifecta Broadheads, with universal ferrule technology, allow the archer to use two different styles of broadheads (fixed or mechanical) in three different weights, 100-, 125- and 150-grain options — all with 420 stainless-steel construction single bevel blades (30-degree bevel on mechanicals and 40-degree bevel on fixed blades). One ferrule can make six different broadheads by just swapping blades. Mechanical blades are .032-inch thick and fixed blades are .078-inch thick — the thickest replaceable blade on the market — and are equipped with a cut-on-contact tip. Cutting diameters range from 2.1 to 1.25 inches, and all broadheads are packaged in a reusable plastic box. Pictured is the 125-grain fixed blade. MSRP: \$49.95/Pack of three.

www.trifectabroadheads.com

VAPOR TRAILS OUTDOORS AFTERMATH

The Aftermath from Vapor Trails Outdoors (\$39.99/ pack of three and one practice tip) is a unique 100-grain mechanical broadhead. It has no O-rings and flies like a field point — its .035-inch stainless-steel blades delivering a 2.125-inch diameter cut. It features a plastic cup that holds the blades closed in flight regardless of arrow velocity and a ball joint locking mechanism. The Aftermath has forward-angled blades that are sharpened front and back, and support arms that move with the blades to add 5X strength. The blades lock open upon impact to rip and cut with forward or reverse movement, designed to deliver maximum terminal damage. www.ghilliemonsteroutdoors.com



WAC'EM HYBRID CROSSBOW EXPANDABLE

The next generation 100-grain Hybrid Crossbow Expandable-Blade Broadhead from Wac'Em (\$44.95/three-pack) builds on a legacy of high-performing product innovation, using the same super-sharp blade technology Wac'Em heads are known for. It combines the field-proven effectiveness of a deep-penetrating fixed-blade with a wide-cutting-diameter mechanical broadhead to create this lethal hybrid design. The Hybrid Crossbow Broadhead is a perfect combination of an exceptionally strong stainless steel ferrule, two cut-on-contact fixed blades with two gator-style expandable blades that open upon impact. Its expandable blades are secured with a friction washer to ensure they can never predeploy and always are fully open on entrance while staying closed in flight — even when fired from today's high-energy crossbows.

www.feradyne.com/wacem

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BY GORDY KRAHN

HUNTING RETAILER NEW PRODUCTS



WEATHERBY MODEL 307 ALPINE MDT BOLT-ACTION RIFLE

Weatherby has teamed up with MDT to produce an ultra-light chassis rifle that can own the range and dominate in the field. The Alpine MDT is built on Weatherby's newest bolt-action rifle platform, the Model 307. Meant to complement the historic Mark V and Vanguard lineups, the Model 307 action is a two-lug, fully cylindrical action compatible with many aftermarket accessories. The Model 307 is designed to accommodate the vast offerings of stocks, triggers, rails, mounts and magazines that exist in today's marketplace. The carbon fiber chassis features a foldable buttstock and when collapsed cuts out over 9 inches of total length making it a great compact rifle option. The Alpine MDT has a durable Graphite Black Cerakote finish. MSRP: \$2,999 www.weatherby.com

REMINGTON CORE-LOKT COPPER BULLET

The "Deadliest Mushroom in the Woods" is now available with a lead-free, all-copper bullet option, the new Remington Core-Lokt Copper. With dependable expansion, proven weight retention near 100 percent and drop-dead accuracy, this precision hollowpoint provides deadly terminal performance across a wide range of velocities. Rigid construction from high-strength pure copper ensures Core-Lokt Copper dispatches big game with authority. Remington's classic Core-Lokt and Core-Lokt Tipped are still being proudly manufactured daily in the USA, and all Remington ammunition uses reliable brass, lead-free primers for consistent ignition, high-quality propellants and precise loading techniques for consistent shot-after-shot performance. Core-Lokt Copper is available in six cartridges with line extensions coming soon. MSRP:

\$40.99-\$60.99 www.remington.com



HAWKE OPTICS VANTAGE WA 3-9X42MM RIFLESCOPE

Hawke Optics' new 3-9x42mm WA L4A Dot Reticle Rifle scope is built on a 30mm main tube that allows more light to enter the scope for better vision and field of view, especially in low-light conditions. It comes with the multi-level red/green illuminated glass-etched L4A reticle, fully multicoated optics, Hawke's H2 glass and 11 layers of coatings for optimal clarity. It has a generous field of view of 42.2 to 13.1 feet at 100 yards and 3.5 inches of eye relief. The L4A Dot uses an outer post design that helps keep more of the target visible while aiming. The Vantage 3-9x42mm WA L4A Rifle scope has a fast-focus eye bell and comes with scope covers and a long-life battery. Retail: \$319 www.hawkeoptics.com



LEGACY SPORTS CITADEL TRAKR YOTE RIMFIRE RIFLE

Legacy Sports has added a new camo pattern to its Citadel Trakr Semi-auto Rifle line. Based on the color and texture of coyote fur, the Yote pattern is an attractive and fun addition to the Trakr Rifle .22 LR Series and is a clear must-have for this summer's plinking. The new design blends in with a wide range of terrains for hunting and is sure to also be a hit at the gun range. The Trakr is also offered in FDE, OD Green, USA Flag, USA Grayscale Flag and Black finishes. It comes equipped with a 18-inch threaded barrel, lightweight synthetic stock, Picatinny rail, fiber-optic front and rear sights, vented forend and one 10-round magazine. MSRP: Starting at \$229. www.legacysports.com



ANTLER KING'S POWER RACK DEER MINERAL

Power Rack Deer Mineral from Antler King is loaded with the nutrients deer need for a healthy immune system and optimal herd health. Body-boosting trace minerals as well as vital vitamins that include A, D and E support antler development, fawn growth and overall health. Power Rack draws in deer and pairs well with Antler King's other mineral products. Simply pour the easy-to-use formula near deer trails or other areas frequented by deer. For maximum antler growth, mix one bag of Power Rack with one bag of Trophy Deer Mineral. Power Rack is available in 5-pound bags. Retail: \$16.99 www.antlerking.com

WOLF PREMIUM OILS MICROFIBER SUEDE CLEANING TOWEL

The Wolf Premium Oils Microfiber Cleaning Towel features state-of-the-art microfiber suede material that sets it apart from ordinary cleaning cloths. Millions of ultra-fine fibers work together to effortlessly capture dirt, dust and grime that can potentially damage firearms, tools, knives and delicate surfaces.



Designed for low absorbency, the Wolf Premium Oil Microfiber Cleaning Towel optimizes gun and knife cleaning by keeping the oil on the product and dust and dirt off, and is generously sized at 16x16 inches, providing ample surface area to tackle any cleaning job effectively. This high-quality towel can be washed hundreds of times without losing its efficacy or softness. It is a long-lasting investment that will continue to deliver exceptional cleaning performance, even after multiple uses. MSRP: \$3.75 www.wolfpremiumoil.com





CHRISTENSEN ARMS MODERN HUNTING RIFLE LONG-ACTION CALIBERS

Christensen Arms has added long-action caliber options to its Modern Hunting Rifle (MHR) lineup. The bolt-action MHR is versatile, modular and future-focused. Built on an aluminum mini-chassis with V-block bedding, it provides the accuracy of a chassis rifle and the ergonomics of a hunting rifle, all while offering exceptional modularity. Utilizing all-new FFT technology, the stock, forearm and grips can be swapped out to create configurations that meet any sport shooting or hunting situation. Chambering options include .300 Win. Mag., .300 PRC, 7mm PRC and 7mm Rem. Mag. Finish options include Black Anodized, Desert Brown and Tungsten Cerakote. Rifle weight starts at 7.6 pounds. MSRP: Starting at \$3,499.99 www.christensenarms.com



SAVAGE ARMS MODEL 110 HOG HUNTER RIFLE

The Model 110 Hog Hunter Bolt-Action Rifle from Savage is as tough and versatile as the animals it's built to hunt — now chambered in .400 Legend. Length of pull is easily customized to fit any shooter for comfort and consistency, and the user-adjustable AccuTrigger provides a light, crisp pull. This rifle is built on Savage's time-tested 110 platform but with a modern design and improved ergonomics. A rugged synthetic stock holds the 20-inch, medium contour, carbon steel barrel that features adjustable iron sights and is threaded for a suppressor. Its oversized bolt handle allows for fast followup shots and the detachable box magazine never catches on brush in the tangled thickets where hogs love to hide. MSRP: \$669 www.savagearms.com

BEAR ARCHERY ADAPT COMPOUND BOW

A joint venture between Bear Archery and The Hunting Public — an online video series showcasing tips and strategies for hunters — the Adapt is a single cam, 32-inch axle-to-axle, 6.5-inch brace height compound bow that features an accommodating 80 percent let-off and fits bowhunters with draw lengths from 24 to 31 inches. It is equipped with the new Bear Paw insulated grip — Bear Archery's most comfortable and ergonomic bow grip to date. With speeds up to 320 fps, a rock solid back wall from the limb stop and smooth draw cycle, the Adapt is a great fit for hunting any size game. In addition to existing color options, the 2024 Adapt also comes in Mossy Oak Bottomland camo. MSRP: \$459.99. www.beararchery.com



NOSE JAMMER WAX STICKS

Nose Jammer Rub On Wax Sticks are designed to overwhelm the sense of smell of big-game animals and predators such as elk, whitetails, pronghorns, wild hogs and coyotes. The time-release formula contains vanillin and other natural aromatic compounds including lignin, a major support structure for trees, grasses and shrubs. These compounds don't alarm game animals, but instead jam the olfactory system. This happens when those compounds are delivered at concentrated levels, overloading the olfactory gland found in an animal's nose, which helps hunters to remain concealed. Nose Jammer Wax Sticks can be purchased online or in store at various retailers and come in a resealable pouch for freshness and longer shelf life. MSRP: \$12.99/2.6 ounces www.nosejammer.com



BLASER R8 ULTIMATE CARBON RIFLE

The R8 Ultimate Carbon Bolt-Action Rifle from Blaser is designed for maximum performance and minimum weight, featuring a 100 percent hand-laid carbon-fiber thumbhole stock built to withstand the most brutal hunting conditions. Equipped with vibration and recoil reduction technology and high torsional strength, the Ultimate Carbon is ideal for hunters who value craftsmanship, accuracy, repeatability and reliability in a durable, lightweight rifle. It also features handsome dark brown weatherproof leather on the grip, forearm and cheek piece, and like other R8 rifles, comes with the Blaser precision trigger and manual cocking system. Optional upgrades include an adjustable comb and recoil absorption system or adjustable recoil pad. It's available in numerous calibers ranging from .22 LR to .500 Jeffery. Retail: Starts at \$10,540 www.blaser-group.com

SAUER 100 H-S PRECISION STOCK RIFLES

Designed for precision hunters and shooters, J.P. Sauer and Sohn's Sauer 100 LWT (lightweight) and Pantera XT rifles are now available with the technically advanced American-made H-S Precision stock featuring a 7075-aluminum bedding block with Kevlar, fiberglass and carbon materials for strength and lightweight structure. Accurate, rugged and reliable, these Sauer 100 (S 100) rifles deliver guaranteed five-shot, sub-MOA performance. Featuring a famously smooth Sauer bolt, adjustable single-stage trigger (from 2.2 to 4.2 pounds), five-round detachable double-stack magazine, three-position safety and cold hammer-forged German steel barrel, the S 100 raises the standard for entry-level rifles. Both models are available in 6.5 Creedmoor, 6.5 PRC, .308 Win. and .300 Win. Mag. MSRP: \$1,799.99 www.blaser-group.com



Why Large Predator Control Matters

Mismanaging predator populations creates a ripple effect for hunters of deer, elk and other species. We can't afford to let the anti's win this fight.

BY BOB ROBB

Few things bring sob-sister donations rolling into the coffers of anti-hunting groups faster than well-thought-out ad campaigns to protect “cuddly” apex predators like wolves, grizzly bears and cougars from “slaughter” by hunters. Two generations raised on Disneyesque portrayals have created a misinformed public that pushes ballot initiatives and, in many states, produces antihunting state game commissioners, both of which make the control of apex predator populations exceedingly difficult, if not against the law. Neither group cares that, in so doing, ungulate populations suffer, at times badly enough to enter predator pit status. As a direct result, hunting opportunity suffers.

Case in point. A 2011-2013 study conducted in Alaska's Nelchina Basin, about 50 miles from the small crossroads town of Glenallen in south-central Alaska, was conducted by state biologists Bruce Dale, Wildlife Science Coordinator with the state of Alaska, and biologist Chris Brockman. The plan was to attach cameras/GPS collars to brown bears and have them shoot selfie videos to help them understand how much bear predation affected moose and caribou populations in an area near the state's limited paved road system.

In a nutshell, here's what they found. After capturing and collaring 17 brown bears, seven of the bears kept the collars intact during the entire study period. Those seven bears produced approximately 36,376 video clips — a 10-second video clip

every 15 minutes — from mid-May to the end of June, when bears are most likely to be feeding on moose and caribou calves. At the end of the study, these bears were re-darted and camera collars collected. The footage showed that these seven bears killed approximately 238 moose and caribou calves during those 45 days. It should be noted that 75 percent of the Nelchina herd's calving area is within the study area, and that, overall, moose numbers dwarf caribou numbers in this area. And remember, this is just seven bears, a fraction of the region's population, and that the big bears compete with local wolf packs and Mother Nature when it comes to killing calves.

Taking it a step further, the late Vic Van Ballenberghe — recognized as perhaps the most knowledgeable moose biologist of all time and who spent four decades studying them in Alaska's Denali National Park — learned that, at times, there was exactly zero moose calf survival in some regions of the park. He learned that grizzlies know where seasonal abundances of food lie in their home ranges. Just as they know when salmon runs occur, they learn when and where moose have their calves each spring. A cow moose, which is unable to reason, has her calf, it's eaten by a bear, but she returns to the same spot next spring to calve again. The bear teaches its cubs where the hunting is good, and the cycle continues until there are no moose left, and the bears move on to greener pastures.

From 1991-2015, I lived in, and

hunted and fished, this area extensively, and I spent a lot of hours surveying game populations from the back seat of a Piper Super Cub. I saw firsthand what bears and wolves can do. I also watched as sport hunting opportunities and hunter success rates dwindled as the moose, caribou, and Dall sheep numbers were pummeled. In fact, only subsistence hunting was allowed for caribou in the Nelchina area; sport hunters were completely shut out.

Now, think about how efficient grizzlies and wolves are as apex predators, and think about how increasing their numbers in the Lower 48 states have, and will, impact future ungulate populations. I throw cougars into this mix as well, since they are revered just as highly by the animal rightist community.

Despite what many anti-hunters tell you, the reintroduction of wolves into the Northern Rockies has had a detrimental effect on ungulate populations in general, and elk, moose and deer in particular. When discussing elk populations inside Yellowstone Park, even the National Park Service — not known as being particularly hunter-friendly — states on its website that “So far, data suggest wolves are contributing to decreased numbers of elk calves surviving to adulthood and decreased survival of adult elk. Wolves may also be affecting where and how elk use the habitat.”

Throw in a growing grizzly population, as well as black bears, cougars and coyotes, and it's no wonder that

ungulates are getting hammered. And while many factors, like harsh winters, contribute to population fluctuations, according to The Wildlife Society, “In the 1990s, the Yellowstone elk population prospered, reaching about 20,000 individuals. With the reintroduction of grey wolves in the park, however, the elk population has fallen over the years.” With that decline came a decline in elk hunting opportunities outside the park. For example, a popular late-season elk hunt held outside Gardiner, Montana, that once issued permits for upwards of 1,000 elk each year, was eliminated in 2011 to help protect the dwindling herd. That's a huge loss in opportunity for sportsmen.

This is why hunters should demand that Lower 48 wolf, grizzly and cougar populations be controlled as part of state and federal game management programs. I was in the courtroom in 1990 when a judge upheld California Proposition 117, which effectively banned all hunting of cougars in the state, the result of which has been a statewide decimation of deer populations, and a resulting loss of sport hunting opportunity. Colorado has a plan to begin reintroducing wolves to the state this year; I smell disaster for elk and deer numbers. In Minnesota, a forever wolf hunt ban was introduced in the legislature, even though the state does not hunt wolves at present. The list goes on. It's a never-ending battle.

What's your take on controlling apex predators? Drop me a note at editor@grandviewoutdoors.com. **HR**



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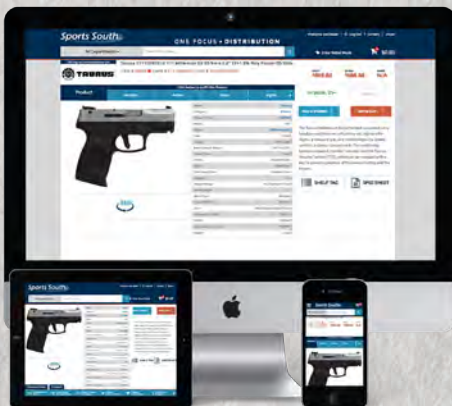
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