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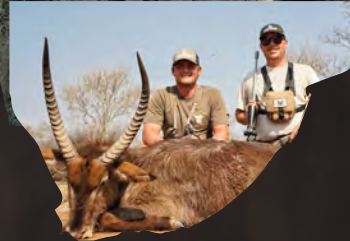


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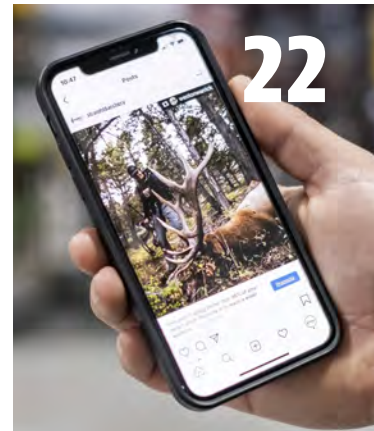
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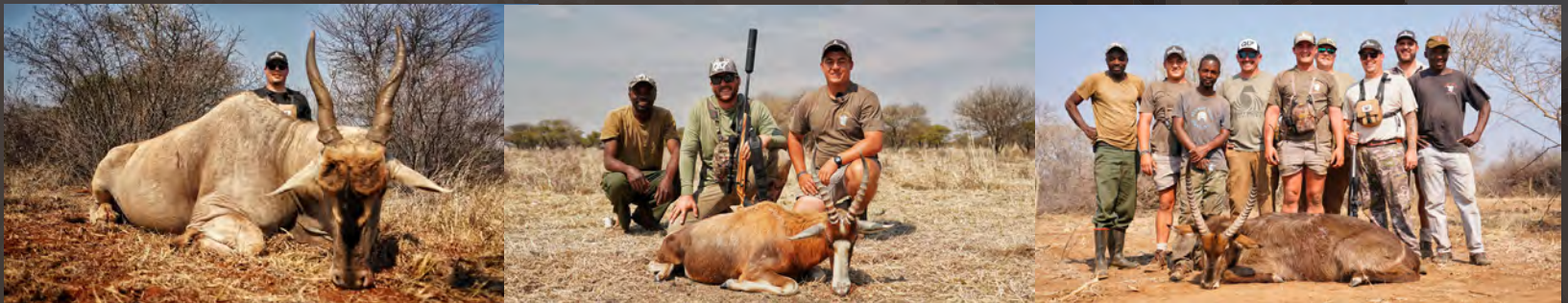
FORT SCOTT MUNITIONS® TAKES TUI® TO AFRICA

Jurassic World is what comes to mind when we look back on a hunt of a lifetime in Africa. Hunting in our local area is one thing but traveling over 9,000 miles south for a hunt is something not many true hunters can accomplish. After two years of planning, two flights and 17hrs in the air, a group from Fort Scott Munitions® just experienced it all. After years of chasing animals of North America, it was time to see what animals and challenges South Africa had to offer for the Fort Scott Munitions® team.

Located in Thabazimbi, South Africa, Wild Wildebeest Lodge offers the best to the people providing you the opportunities for hunts of a lifetime. Guided by the best PH's (Professional Hunters), we were able to successfully take 23 animals with our Tumble Upon Impact® ammunition. With having successful hunts with other calibers, newer TUI® calibers were taken south to prove that they are reliable and successful as we say. The 8.6 Blackout, 270 Win, 7MM Mag, 300 Win Mag and 30-06 all were tested, performing ethically on the animals hunted. The goal was to hunt a variety of animals and prove our TUI® ammo will perform on any game. Successfully we were able to hunt wildebeest, warthog, kudu, zebra, nyala, common blesbuck, yellow blesbuck, eland, waterbuck, ostrich, red hartebeest, common impala, black impala, gemsbuck, with some being hunted more than once.

Every aspect of the adventure was a new experience. One thing that seems to be a favorite for us were the meals provided by Wild Wildebeest Lodge. All meals were a local cuisine style that included steaks from 9 different game, ostrich stew, wildebeest pizza, warthog chicken fried steak, impala pasta and others. All other game taken by the lodge guest is donated to local schools to provide the kids meals.

This trip is considered a once in a lifetime opportunity, but it may not be a one time trip after all.



ABOUT TUMBLE UPON IMPACT® AMMUNITION

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SHOT Show Is 8th Largest Trade Show in America

NSSF's SHOT Show® is now the eighth largest trade show in America, according to Trade Show Executive's just-released Gold 100 rankings. The rankings were based on trade shows held throughout the United States in 2022 and measured by net square feet.

After having to cancel its 2021 show due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2022 SHOT Show featured the event's largest floorplan

ever with 804,000 net square feet of exhibit space — up from 676,000 net square feet in 2020.

"The SHOT Show was the only trade show in America to grow by 20-plus percent in 2022, which was quite the feat after having to cancel the 2021 event," said Chris Dolnack, NSSF Senior Vice President and Chief Customer Officer. "That's a testament to the amazing industry we serve, and we're very thankful

for this great honor by Trade Show Executive in recognizing the show's growth."

In addition to its exhibit space at The Venetian Expo, the 2022 SHOT Show marked an expansion of the show to Caesars Forum, with the two facilities connected by a footbridge. This expanded floorplan allowed more companies than ever before to exhibit at the show.

The show is now the third largest



trade show held in Las Vegas.

The 2024 SHOT Show will return to Las Vegas on January 23-26 at both The Venetian Expo and Caesars Forum.

Vista Outdoor Announces Name for Outdoor Products Segment

Vista Outdoor Inc., the parent company of 41 brands that design, manufacture and market sporting and outdoor lifestyle products to consumers around the globe, announced the name and identity of its Outdoor Products segment following a planned separation.

Outdoor Products will be named Revelyst, Inc., and the company will trade on the New York Stock Exchange under the ticker symbol "GEAR" once the separation is complete.

The company's new name is a blended word that combines "revel," to experience with abandon, and "catalyst," an unwavering source of transformation. According to the company, "Revelyst captures the company's ethos of helping consumers become their best while serving as a catalyst for memorable experiences through performance gear and precision technologies." Revelyst's logo is a dragonfly.

"We are excited and proud to introduce Revelyst to the world," said Eric Nyman, CEO of Revelyst. "Revelyst is a collective of maker brands united

by an obsession with craftsmanship, a consumer-first culture and helping people achieve their greatest outdoor aspirations. We will leverage operational expertise, shared financial resources and cross-collaboration to de-

liver products and technologies that support consumers in wide ranges of pursuits. While today we are best known by the innovations that we make, our journey to becoming the greatest house of brands in the outdoor industry is focused on the wildly human experiences that we make possible."

Revelyst's portfolio of brands includes Fox, Bell, Giro, CamelBak, Camp Chef, Bushnell, Simms Fishing, Foresight Sports and Bushnell Golf. The company will serve

consumers in a diverse and fast-growing set of categories, representing an estimated \$15 billion domestic market in its core, with an estimated total global addressable market that exceeds \$100 billion.

Revelyst will be led by Nyman, who began as CEO of the segment on Aug. 21, and a dedicated management team. Revelyst will employ 2,900 people across multiple locations.



Pope and Young Hires Justin Spring as Executive Director

Pope and Young recently announced the hiring of Justin Spring as its new executive director. Justin is a very well-established conservationist, measurer, and a lifelong bowhunter who has found great success in the field.

Justin's experience he brings to Pope and Young comes from both his professional goals and personal passion for hunting and conservation. He is a lifelong bowhunter and has spent the last 15 years with The Boone and Crockett Club, starting as its assistant director of Big Game Records in 2008 and moving into the director of Big Game Records



role in 2015. He holds a BS degree from Northland College where he studied biology and natural resources.

In addition to managing the records department and Boone and Crockett's triennial Awards Program, he also serves on both the Records and Ethics Committees for

the organization. He has served on three of Pope and Young's judges' panels and was an administrator of five panels for Boone and Crockett. Justin recently termed out as a director for The Montana Wild Sheep Foundation, completing a 9-year tenure on their board.

Justin has had guest appearances on numerous podcasts including MeatEater and Pope and Young's podcast, and his writings have appeared in Boone and Crockett Club's books and magazines, as well as other outdoor publications. He has hunted 15 of the recognized categories of big game in North

America, nearly all unguided, and successfully taken four of those with archery equipment.

"I am greatly honored to be selected by Pope and Young's Board of Directors to serve as the next executive director for the organization," said Justin Spring. "The passion and dedication of both the staff and leadership I have had the opportunity to work with over the last 15 years has me very excited about taking on this new position. I look forward to help shape the positive impacts the organization can make for conservation and bowhunting in the coming years."



EDITORIAL

Editor in Chief / Hilary Dyer
Product Editor / Gordy Krahn
Digital Editor / Tim Dobbins

CREATIVE

Art Director / Mark Kingsbury

ADMINISTRATION

Circulation / Holly Gensler
holly.gensler@colepublishing.com

ADVERTISING

President/Publisher GVO / Derrick Nawrocki
derrick.nawrocki@grandviewoutdoors.com

Regional Sales Manager / Mike Kizzire
mike.kizzire@grandviewoutdoors.com

Regional Sales Manager / Patrick Boyle
patrick.boyle@grandviewoutdoors.com

Regional Sales Manager / Donald Harris
don.harris@grandviewoutdoors.com

Account Executive / Brad Bisnette
brad.bisnette@colepublishing.com

HUNTING

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

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Coworkers Can Provide an Education

Your employees can teach each other a lot if you pair them up in complementary teams.

BY KEN WYSOCKY

If you prefer learning out on the job site through interaction with colleagues over time in a classroom, you're not alone.

You're also well on your way to understanding the value of so-called learning relationships and how they promote continuous learning in the workplace. That, in turn, leads to more engaged and productive employees.

"As humans, we're innately wired to learn continually throughout our lives and careers," says Lauren Bidwell, Ph.D., a psychologist who works as a research scientist at SAP SuccessFactors. "The problem,

however, is the typical disconnect between how we as people want to learn and how organizations tend to teach us.

"Humans are social learners. The most natural and effective way we learn is through other people — simply watching them and mimicking. Children are a really perfect example of this. Social learning is always happening, whether it's intentional or not."

A NATURAL PROCESS

Social learning, also called agile learning, is not only more desirable, it's also more cost-effective for

organizations. Yet it's often difficult to achieve. As companies get larger and larger, social learning can pose logistical challenges, Bidwell says.

As a result, organizations instead developed formal training programs to disseminate knowledge and information relatively quickly to broad groups of people. "But this isn't consistent with how we learn best — how we prefer to learn — and it's costly to implement," she says.

Social learning is better because it happens all the time, with no formal start or end time. It's also employee-driven. Overall, it's more engaging and effective than static learning,

which tends to be top-down instruction that's mandated, comes from external sources (not fellow employees) and only occurs during a specific time period — say, during a daylong seminar, for example.

"Static learning relies on external resources rather than leveraging the knowledge that already exists in the workforce," Bidwell says. "Agile is a dynamic type of learning that's employee-driven. It's multidirectional, not just one person talking to you."

Moreover, static learning is reactive, while agile learning is more proactive.





ESTABLISH LEARNING RELATIONSHIPS

To integrate development into employees' jobs — instead of in addition to their jobs — companies need to learn how to leverage the power of learning relationships, Bidwell says.

Learning relationships generally occur between two employees and support the learning and growth of one or both people. They're more informal in nature and involve sharing skills as well as perspectives. They're also ongoing and adaptive/customizable.

A mentor and mentee represent one example of a learning relationship, but the definition is much broader than just an older, seasoned employee showing a young employee the ropes.

Instead, a learning relationship can serve a variety of purposes. Such a relationship might pair a new employee with a more established peer for onboarding purposes or for helping an employee adjust to a new role after a promotion, she says.

In other instances, the relationship might be aimed at specific skill development (think a younger employee teaching an older employee about social media). You can pair someone with a desired skill with someone who desires it.

A partnership can also connect employees who otherwise might not be as likely to connect. One example is intergenerational partnerships, which promote sharing different viewpoints and creating better cross-generational communication and understanding. That's an important factor these days as companies contend with multigenerational workforces.

Organizations can match employees from different backgrounds to improve diversity and inclusion efforts, or pair up people with similar diversity backgrounds to promote support networks. Or they can bring together employees with similar health and well-being goals, such as quitting smoking, running a marathon or losing weight. "They

can partner together to achieve those goals ... and help hold each other accountable," Bidwell says.

TANGIBLE RESULTS

These learning relationships are effective when executed well. Bidwell says SAP data shows that mentees in the partnership — the people learning a new skill — are promoted five times more often than nonmentee employees. They also report an 18% higher level of job satisfaction, not to mention less work stress and increased self-confidence. "That (increased self-confidence) is especially good for employees who are learning a new role," she says.

Better yet, the relationships are mutually beneficial. For example, mentors are promoted six times more often than nonmentors. And in organizations that foster these mentoring-like relationships, employee turnover is lower — 38% less for mentees and 20% less for mentors. Moreover, employment engagement is 66% higher.

Organizations that invest in partnerships aimed at diversity and inclusion also enjoy better retention of employees and enhanced employee diversity at management levels. "These (learning relationships) tend to outweigh other initiatives, such as diversity training, cross-training or targeted recruiting," Bidwell says.

For many organizations, developing effective learning relationship programs can be a challenge. For instance, only 31% of surveyed SAP SuccessFactors customers rated their mentoring programs as effective, she says.

But technology can help mitigate those factors. For example, software programs can help identify good partner matches for learning relationships and make it easier to track and monitor results, she says.

In the end, agile learning through strategic learning relationships looks like a viable answer to the problems of poor employee engagement, productivity and retention. **HR**



Cold-Weather Hunting Boots

These three hunting boots will keep your customers comfortable in the field for longer.



BY MARK CHESNUT

Anbody who has hunted for very long knows full well that hunting has its ups and downs. Some of the very best times of my life have been spent in the field or blind, and I can vividly remember details of some hunting trips from more than a half century ago, like my very first bobwhite quail and one time in Nebraska when I shot a true triple on ringneck roosters during a near white-out blizzard.

On the other hand, some of the most miserable times of my life also came on hunting trips, and I vividly remember many of those details, too. I'm talking about times like sitting in a treestand with bow in hand when it was so cold that the snot froze in my nose and my eyelids were frozen shut, and another morning in a frigid duck blind when it was actually too cold for the

ducks and I was pretty sure I wouldn't make it out without frostbite.

My feet are particularly problematic when cold weather hits. In fact, I'm not the only hunter who has seen many hunts end prematurely because of my feet getting cold before the rest of me does. If you've never sat in a deer stand or a duck blind with feet frozen into what feels like solid blocks of ice, you've been better prepared than I have at times. Fortunately, modern manufacturing ensures that cold-weather boots available for hunting are better than they've ever been.

Let's take a look at some top-quality cold-weather hunting boots you might want to consider stocking for your customers this fall.



LACROSSE ALPHABURLY PRO

For those customers who are going to be hunting in the mud and the gunk, a good pair of rubber boots is likely to meet their needs. And the LaCrosse Alpha Burly is a quality rubber boot that is still at a price point that many of your customers can live with.

Combining high-quality, scent-free rubber with naturally insulating neoprene, the Alphaburly Pro features a thick cushioning EVA midsole for added comfort. Additionally, an embossed liner allows for better air circulation, while an adjustable gusset gives a perfect fit.

The boot's unique tread pattern gives the wearer the traction needed to move through demanding terrain, while the chamfered edges shed mud and muck. And the Alphaburly Pro's full rubber-over-neoprene construction combines comfort with much-needed scent control for those in pursuit of deer, elk and other big game. With a comfortable, secure fit to keep your foot in place while on the move, these boots also go on and come off with ease.

The boot is available with 18-inch uppers in several different camouflage patterns and insulation levels, including uninsulated, 400, 1000 and 1600G in Realtree Edge, uninsulated, 800 and 1600G in Optifade Elevated II camo, uninsulated and 1600G in Optifade Marsh, 800G in Optifade Timber, 800G in Realtree Max-5, forest green and several other combinations.

The Alphaburly Pros carry a price tag of about \$230 — a very reasonable price for a top-quality rubber hunting boot that'll last your customers many years.



DANNER PRONGHORN 8" REALTREE EDGE 1200G

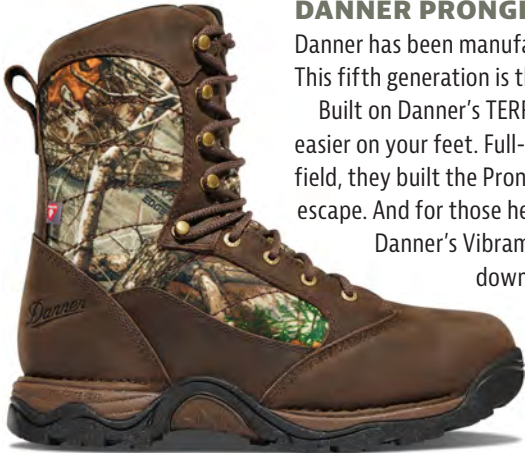
Danner has been manufacturing the Pronghorn boot for nearly two decades, and each new iteration seems to be better than the last. This fifth generation is the culmination of years of Pronghorn history and cutting-edge footwear technology.

Built on Danner's TERRA FORCE® NEXT™ platform, the Pronghorn delivers the all-day comfort and stability that make the day's haul easier on your feet. Full-grain leather forms the upper around the company's proven 851 last. To cope with unpredictable weather in the field, they built the Pronghorn with a GORE-TEX waterproof liner that ensures no water gets in, while allowing sweat and moisture to escape. And for those headed out hunting in extremely cold climates, this Pronghorn features 1200G PrimaLoft insulation.

Danner's Vibram SPE Midsole maintains the same cushioning properties as traditional EVA, but is more durable and won't break down as easily. The technology also enhances rebound, comfort and support, bringing durability without weight.

The Pronghorn's fifth-generation outsole is quite rugged and responds well in diverse terrain. Not only does it provide better grip than past iterations, but it also fits seamlessly into the boot's streamlined, lower-profile design. Additionally, the company's TERRA FORCE NEXT platform combines an internal and external shank system that helps to provide arch support and torsion control.

Finally, the Pronghorn's 851 last is an update of Danner's popular 850 last. It fits true to size with an athletic and supportive fit while providing ample room in the toe. Additionally, the specialized heel shape locks the heel in place for better fit and comfort at the back end of the foot. For such a feature-packed boot, the Pronghorn carries a price tag that might surprise your customers. It starts at about \$300.



MERRELL THERMO CHILL

Hunters whose exploits take them on long treks in cold weather need a boot that is warm enough to keep their feet warm when they are standing or sitting, but that won't make their feet so hot they sweat a lot when on the trail. The Merrell Thermo Chill does just that. This boot features a waterproof membrane for all-over defense from snow and low-bulk insulation for all-around warmth in cold temperatures. The fleece lining ensures comfort even on long hauls, and protective, abrasion-resistant rubber toe caps protect both your boots and your feet.

The Merrell's 200 grams of synthetic lightweight insulation provides warmth and comfort, and the boot features a Kinetic Fit BASE removable contoured footbed for flexible support. A molded nylon arch shank aids stability, and an air cushion in the heel helps absorb shock and adds even more stability.

The boot also features metal hooks and lace closures and waterproof, polyurethane-coated leather/mesh uppers. The Merrell sticky rubber outsole with durable traction grips the terrain when and where you need it. With lug depth of 5mm, these boots weigh only 1 pound, 4 ounces each. Not only are these boots comfortable and functional, but they're also quite easy on the eyes. And with an MSRP of around \$120, the Thermo Chill is a good, light boot that is well within the price range of most of your customers.





7 Great Parkas to Warm Up Seasonal Sales

Keep customers warm in the woods and they'll be more successful — and these parkas are a great way to do that.

BY KEVIN REESE

Nothing destroys a hunt faster than cold weather. For an ill-prepared hunter, consequences can range from minor mental distraction and reduced motor skills to loss of feeling and functions (gripping, walking), cognitive impairment, hypothermia and obviously, as a result if not treated immediately, death; moreover, simply freezing

to death is a real danger for some hunters trekking in the harshest of environments. Considering cold-related illnesses, injuries and deaths can occur in wide-ranging climates, all hunters should carefully consider weather patterns and forecasts when preparing for adventures, especially through fall and winter months — the most popular seasons for hunting

pursuits — and retailers should be prepared to guide them in decision making.

Just as important, hunting retailers should follow suit with department stores in offering seasonal outerwear well in advance and throughout the duration of such periods of activity. In the case of America's most popular hunting opportunities, this means

predominantly colder weather and dictates that industry retailers should include outerwear items like parkas. What is a parka? Put simply, it's still a jacket but with longer length covering most or all of the wearer's hip area. That said, here are seven great hunting parkas sure to heat up fall through spring sales.



SITKA HUDSON JACKET

One of the most popular hunting apparel companies in the industry, Sitka Gear, was founded by former NFL football player and avid outdoorsman, Jason Hairston. In 2009, Hairston sold Sitka Gear to W.L. Gore & Associates, Inc. — yes, the developer of famed Gore-Tex's all-weather systems. Since then, the Gore & Associates team continues to follow in Hairston's footsteps, dedicated to producing top-performing outerwear designed specifically for diehard hunters. One of the finest, most recent examples of Sitka's focus can be found in the Hudson Jacket.

Perfect for your most demanding duck hunters, the Hudson Jacket is parka-length outerwear built for comfort and mobility for all-day waterfowling in brutally cold and wet conditions. The Hudson Jacket boasts a three-layer Gore-Tex laminate outer shell; additional Gore-Tex with Stretch technology in the neck and shoulder areas for optimum mobility; PrimaLoft insulation; water-sealing gasket cuffs; sculpted, fully adjustable hood; roomy, bellowed shell pockets; zippered call pockets and GORE OPTIFADE Concealment Waterfowl Marsh finish. www.sitkagear.com



ARCTIC SHIELD TUNDRA 3-IN-1 PARKA

While original parent company ARC launched in 1999, the first ArcticShield product wasn't unveiled until 2004. Today, ArcticShield is owned by Absolute Outdoor LLC, and the mission remains the same: to "create high-quality gear so you can outlast whatever conditions come your way." Fortunately for your customers, while ArcticShield apparel is designed for all-day hunting in ridiculously cold environments, the apparel line is designed by hunters, for hunters. This means comfort and mobility are nearly as important as protection. Between quality, comfort, protection and price points, your customers are going to love ArcticShield. A personal favorite of mine is the Tundra 3-in-1 Parka.

It's tough to beat a premium parka system at a value-focused price point, and Arctic fills the bill perfectly with the Tundra 3-in-1 Parka. Designed to keep hunters warm and dry for all-day pursuits in excessively wet and cold environments, the Tundra boasts Retain heat technology; durable, waterproof and windproof yet quiet outer shell with full-zip and storm-flap snap closures; Realtree Timber camouflage exterior pattern; roomy YKK-zippered chest and handwarmer pockets; zippered security pockets; additional two-way lower pockets; Adjustable wrist cuffs and articulated elbows; removable three-piece hood; adjustable hood and waist drawcords and a zip-out fleece vest. The interior vest features soft, warm fleece construction with a stand-up collar, zippered chest and handwarmer pockets, and an adjustable drawcord bottom hem. If the Tundra's description reads like a too-much-to-list item, it is. This is where incredible value sits for your hunting customers. www.arcticshieldoutdoor.com



FILSON TIN CLOTH FIELD JACKET

Clinton C. Filson called it right when he grew roots in Seattle, Washington. As it turned out, he was perfectly positioned to outfit the 1897 Klondike gold rushers, and he arrive well-equipped. As an apparel outfitter, he understood clothing in the Northwest was much more about purpose and protection, although Filson clothing looks darn good, too! Of course, Filson jackets aren't just for gold rushers and blue-collared work environments — they are also great for hunting and outdoor adventures. My personal favorite is also one of Filson's most popular, the Tin Cloth Field Jacket.

Filson's Tin Cloth Field Jacket, dressed out in dark tan with a richly contrasted brown collar, is quite popular among upland bird hunters. Boasting Filson's oil finish and waxed cotton fabric, the Tin Cloth Field Jacket offers extraordinary weather-resistant protection from the elements to keep your customers warm and dry all day, every day. Additional features include a seamless shoulder design, robust shell pockets, wool-lined hand-warming pockets, two-way front zipper closure with storm flap, drawcord-adjustable waist and hem, and a rear nylon-coated, zippered game pocket. www.filson.com



GAMEHIDE WHISPER BLAZE ORANGE PARKA

Gamehide burst onto the scene nearly 30 years ago with aspirations to deliver the best hunting outerwear available at the best price point. Long ago, I learned about Gamehide's Hush Hide outer shell and had to have one — it was my first whisper-quiet jacket. A lot has changed over the years, including technology, and now Gamehide jackets are among the quietest, warmest I own. Even better, Gamehide parkas like the Whisper are offered in blaze orange, perfect for safety and to meet visibility requirements for hunting in various states.

One of my favorite parkas, from personal experience and for color requirements, is the Gamehide Whisper Blaze Orange Parka. While the Whisper Parka is the most affordable offering in this lineup, it's certainly no slouch in areas of warmth and comfort, even in ridiculously cold environments; in fact, the Whisper is Gamehide's warmest parka. Features include 280 grams of HeatTech insulation; HydroCore lining; blaze-orange camo fabric; roomy rear cargo pocket perfect for upland birds; multiple front pockets to stow calls, cartridges and snacks; chest pocket with cartridge loops and a shoulder patch designed to keep a rifle sling from slipping. From duck hunting to elk hunting, Gamehide has something for everybody at price points your customers will love. www.gamehide.com



BROWNING WOMEN'S 4-IN-1 PARKA

Born in 1855, John Moses Browning made quick work climbing the elite firearm manufacturing ranks. At just 14, he produced a slide rifle for his brother's birthday. At 23, he developed his first single-shot rifle and patented his design at just 24 years old. Soon after, in 1880, Browning was formed, and just two years later, Winchester bought Browning's single-shot design and renamed it the Winchester Model 1885. Of course, we're talking parkas, so 1968 was also important. It was the birth of Browning's apparel. Today, Browning produces premium hunting clothes, and I definitely own a few items. Among the brand's latest and greatest, your hunting customers are sure to love Browning's Women's 4-in-1 Parka.

The only ladies-only offering in this lineup, the Browning Women's 4-in-1 Parka is the perfect solution for any huntress planning off-grid adventures in ridiculously cold and wet conditions. The 4-in-1 Parka boasts a waterproof yet breathable, two-layer Pre-Vent Plus outer shell, chest-area fleece-lined handwarmer pockets; larger lower, fleece-lined hand-warming gear pockets; interior protective pockets; fully adjustable, attached hood with brim; adjustable cuffs, back license tab and an interior, insulated, removable liner. The insulated liner features a water- and wind-resistant outer shell, PrimaLoft Hi-Loft silver 80-gram insulation, hand-warmer pockets, full-length front zipper, zippered external and internal pockets. The outer parka shell, as well as the internal liner, boasts a Browning Ovix camouflage finish. www.browning.com



PNUMA SELKIRK JACKET

Founded in 2016 by Scott Schultz, a hardcore hunting enthusiast with a passion for improving the clothes we wear for intense pursuits in extreme conditions, Pnuma has been laser-focused since day one on producing premium hunting apparel designed to be as tough as the hunters who wear it, and in Pnuma's words, "outperform and outlast" anything else in the market. It's quite a bold statement; however, Pnuma backs it up with a lifetime warranty. Normally, I would insert "buy once, cry once" here, but Pnuma price points are definitely palatable. Your customers are sure to notice such value, and speaking from experience, my Pnuma outerwear definitely still looks new. For colder and wetter fall weather, the Pnuma Selkirk Jacket is going to make many hunters happy this fall.

At an average weight of just 40 ounces, the Pnuma Selkirk Jacket is exceptionally light; however, it's designed to keep hunters warm and dry even in extreme conditions. Protective qualities include a Porelle Extreme waterproof, breathable membrane; 10,000mm waterproof rating; DWR repellent, whisper-quiet soft shell; 16,000g/sqm/24hr breathability rating; PnumaGrid fleece lining; YKK waterproof zippers; PnumaGuard non-slip, wear-resistant shoulder and elbow overlays; three-way adjustable hood and a safety harness port. For comfort, the Pnuma Selkirk is designed to accommodate sub-layering and features super micro-brushed tricot shell material, as well as thermal-regulating zippered vents. www.pnumaoutdoors.com



DRAKE WATERFOWL G3 FLEX 3-IN-1 WATERFOWLER'S JACKET

Founded in 2002, Drake Waterfowl calls Olive Branch, Mississippi, home and from day one has been driven by the needs of hardcore duck hunters. For over 20 years now, Drake has aspired to deliver more protection from the waterfowling elements than any other outerwear producer. I'm a personal fan of Drake Waterfowl apparel, and my Guardian Elite insulated jacket and bibs are the best duck-hunting combo in my closet. That said, Drake's current top-shelf parka-length offering is the G3 Flex 3-in-1 Waterfowler's Jacket.

According to Drake, the G3 Flex 3-in-1 Waterfowler's Jacket is the company's "warmest, most technical, functional and versatile jacket ever." Considering the G3 Flex's features, I have to agree. In a waterfowler's world where weather can change on a dime, but where prime time is always brutally wet and blistering cold, design features like waterproof protection, insulation, layers and most importantly, versatility, not only rule the day, they dictate just how long your hunting day might be. Let's face it, staying in the game all day when Mother Nature is dishing her worst, but duck hunting is at its best, can be tough.

To ensure your duck-hunting customers can make the all-day cut, the G3 Flex features waterproof, wind-proof and breathable G3 Flex fabric; durable water-repellant treatment (DWR); polyester microfleece-lined collar; quick-access pockets with Magnattach closures; zippered underarm vents; Sherpa-lined handwarmer pockets; roomy cargo pockets with internal shell loops; adjustable cuffs and a removable LST Double Down Endurance hybrid Liner. The liner features 160-gram, polyester-synthetic down insulation on the chest, back, shoulders and upper arms; stretchable, breathable polyester forearms and sides; zippered and Magnattach pockets; elastic cuffs and waist; and zippered underarm vents. While Drake has aspired to offer the best protection and comfort to waterfowlers, today's offerings also cover turkey and big-game adventures. Drake has something for all of your hunting customers. www.drakewaterfowl.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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THE ARCHERY BUSINESS PAVILION AT SHOT SHOW IN 2024

The Archery Business Pavilion will be a NEW part of SHOT Show focused on outdoor, hunting, archery and crossbow companies brought together in a common space. Here's the latest news!

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 many 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 from eight early exhibitors,

as well as the September/October 2023 issue for comments from 10 more exhibitors. At the end of this article, you'll hear from four additional 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.



SPECIALTY ARCHERY – ANDREW PAULEY, OWNER

Specialty Archery is a precision archery equipment manufacturer based out of Spencer, Iowa. The company is well known for its high-quality scopes and lenses for 3-D and target archery competitions, as well as its competition and hunting stabilizers, Bodoodle arrow rests, and many other archery accessories. Specialty Archery is best known for its replaceable Aperture Peep System, Clarifiers for target archers, and Verifiers for archers who need some assistance in seeing their sight pins clearly.



The company is also proud to offer a line of archery shop equipment, such as the Pro Press and Pro Draw, the most innovative bow press in the industry. Another offering in the archery shop equipment line are the innovative Super Servers, which provide fast and easy bowstring manufacturing.

"Specialty Archery is nearly 35 years old, and provides some of the best archery equipment in the world," said Specialty Archery Owner Andrew Pauley. "This happens by having a great team and company goals. We strive to make innovative products that are dependable and last a lifetime. The trust our customers have in our products allows archers to win world titles, as well as harvest world-class game.

"We are excited to attend the first year of the SHOT Show Archery Pavilion. Serving new and existing customers is what we do, and we are looking forward to offering the next line of new, dependable products."

Be sure to stop by the Specialty Archery booth and check out the Bodoodle Influence arrow rest. Target archers and avid hunters from all over the world can use this rest for either specialty. You can use it as a fixed-blade launcher or as a drop away. The rest is quickly detachable from a mounting bracket that allows you to take off, store it for travel, and put it back in the same place every time. Booth: #80510; www.specialtyarch.com



RGD – JEFF BRUSS, FOUNDER

RGD cases offer unmatched protection in safeguarding valuable hunting and shooting equipment. RGD cases feature versatility and durability including waterproof exterior





shells, removable foam interior padding, and lifetime warranties against defects. RGD cases are constructed with military-grade materials to ensure longevity and dependable performance including heavy-duty zippers, welded waterproof seams, and double stitched handles. In addition to cases, RGD offers a complete line of fully waterproof ammo bags, backpacks, duffels and luggage.

RGD will be introducing three new products at SHOT Show 2024: the VERTIPACK, a fully waterproof camping backpack with a unique vertical zipper design; the ADAPTAPACK, roll top waterproof bushcraft bag; and an extra-large fully waterproof shooting and blind bag.

"We couldn't be more excited to showcase our diverse and unique line of cases and packs to the SHOT crowd," said RGD Founder Jeff Bruss. "The Archery Business Pavillon offers us a premium niche location and easy access, so we've got high expectations for a good show." Booth: #80720; www.rugidgear.com



BAKCOU — TERI CHILD, EVENT COORDINATOR

Bakcou is an industry-leading company of elite, fat-tire electric bikes and scooters designed for bowhunters, military, first responders, and outdoor enthusiasts. Bakcou is committed to the design and manufacturing of the best electric bicycles, bicycle components, and related products on the market. The company is uncompromising in its materials, process of manufacturing, development of new products, and innovation of the highest quality.

"We are so excited to be attending the 2024 Shot Show," said Bakcou Event Coordinator Teri Child. "SHOT Show is the best arena to establish



and build relationships with industry leading companies. We love the positive energy and excitement surrounding SHOT Show and specifically the new Archery Business Pavilion. We look forward to a successful 2024 and many years to come."

Not all eBikes are created equal, especially when it comes to battery capacity and quality. The Bakcou staff attending SHOT Show 2024 will be happy to explain what you should look for in a battery and how the company spares no expense providing hunters with the best eBike "gas tank" on the market. In addition, unlike many eBikes on the market with weak nylon gearing in the conversion motor, Bakcou models are engineered to deliver power and durability from all-metal gearing. Finally, another reason why Bakcou is considered the elite SUV of eBikes is its 14-speed internal gear hub, or Rohloff Speed Hub. The rear gearing is enclosed in a waterproof casing, protecting it from the hazards and conditions found on a backcountry hunt.

Stop by the Bakcou booth at SHOT Show 2024 to check out why the company's eBikes are the best models for hunters. Booth #80721; www.bakcou.com



STEAMBOW — GERALD MISSBACH, CEO

Steambow is an Austrian manufacturer of high-end archery products. The company's AR-6 Stinger II Tactical and Compact modular crossbows, as well as the Fenris magazine for compound bows, have revolutionized the archery world and allow shooters to achieve incredible accuracy with minimal training time.

Steambow is committed to making bows and crossbows more fun and usable to a wider audience. With that in mind, the company recently announced the launch of its 10-Shot Detachable Magazine

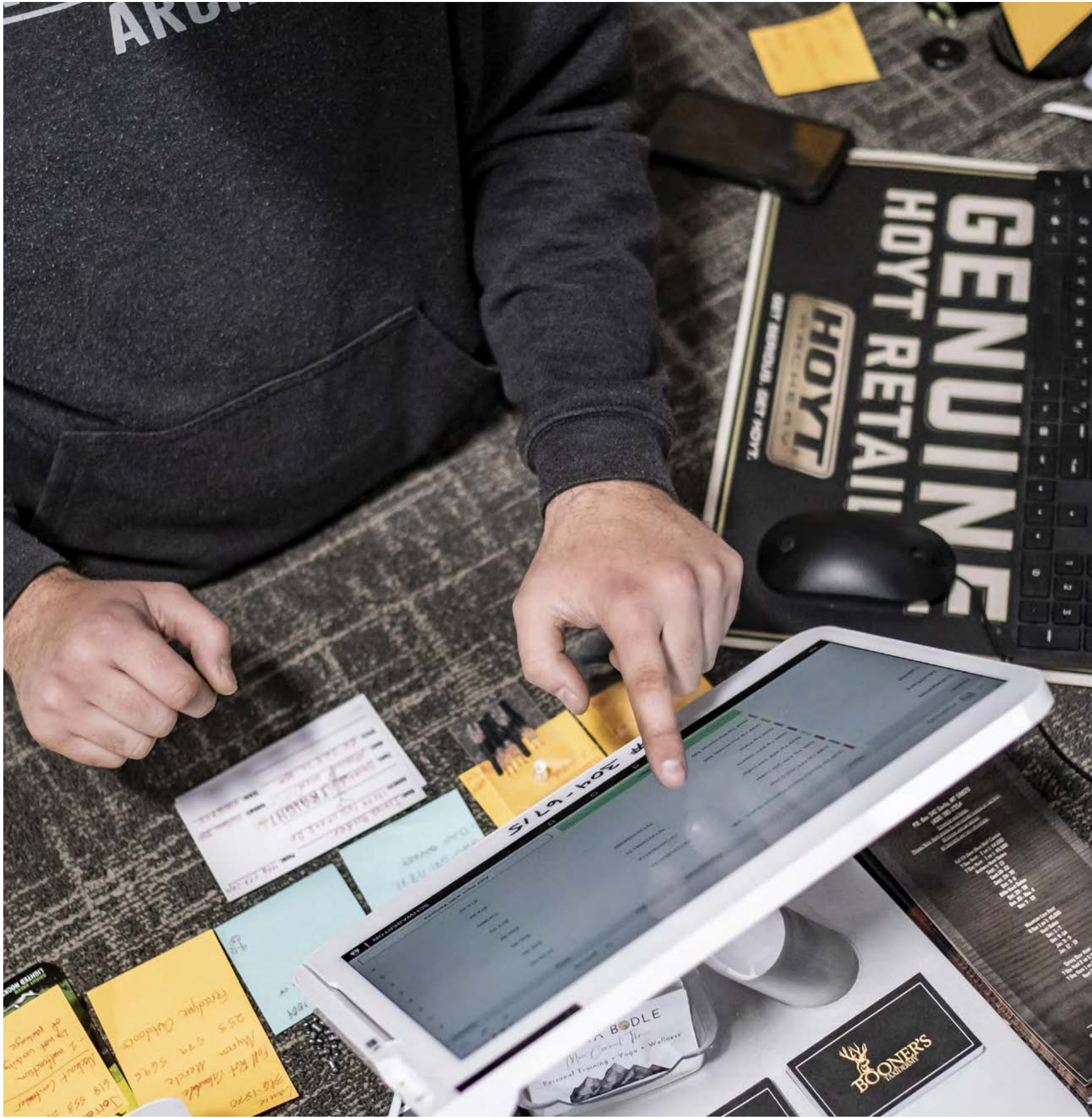
Crossbow for shooters who want to take more shots with less reloading at the range.

Boasting a larger magazine approximately the size of a 30-round AR magazine that can accommodate 10 arrows, the hard-hitting 10-Shot Detachable Magazine Crossbow features a similar style to Steambow's AR6 Stinger models, but with an improved pistol body, including a new butt stock, foregrip, string dampeners, and tuning trigger. It also offers multiple sight options for a customized shooting experience.

Shooters can choose between the 10-Shot Detachable Magazine Crossbow unit or a conversion kit that upgrades their existing AR6 Stinger II Tactical or Compact to the 10-arrow magazine.

"The SHOT Show has always been a great show, not just for us but for the whole industry," said Steambow CEO Gerald Missbach. "The new possibilities the Archery Business Pavilion now brings, especially the shooting lane, make the show an even bigger and greater event for us." Shooting Lane #80126, also booth #72715 in Caesars Forum; www.steambow.com





An Intro to Digital Marketing Tools

If you're not already marketing to your customers online, you're way, way behind.

BY MARK KAKKURI

Even if you think you've got a good handle on the marketing tactics that work best for your hunting customers, it's a good time to review them — again — and make sure you've crossed all the t's and dotted all the i's. After all, while marketing philosophy in general may stay the same, the specific tactics change all the time. Moreover, your target audience is changing, too. Consider: You want to reach, among other demographics, modern 21-year-olds — an age group that now meets virtually every legal age requirement for just about any activity in the U.S., including hunting. These youngsters likely have their own transportation, income from steady employment, and a growing sense of independence. Most of them grew up with not only regular access to the Internet but also a smartphone or other mobile device constantly in hand. For them, learning and researching and shopping (along with a lot of other activities) occurs *online*.

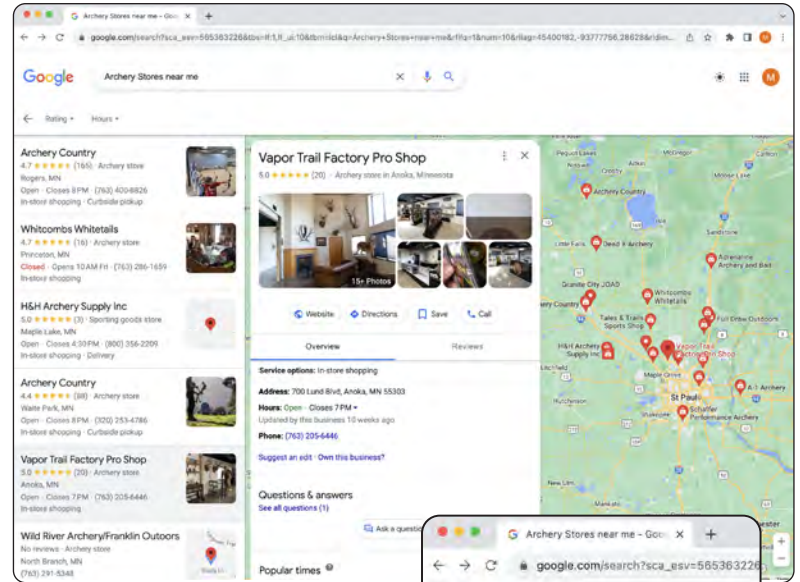
Some are already hunters because of their upbringing; others will become hunters because another hunter invites them to try it or they seek out information on their own. If they're young and/or a newbie to hunting, you won't affect them with your marketing efforts unless your marketing efforts are online. Even hunters who are twice their age and older are more online than ever. Bottom line: Despite hunting being one of the oldest activities known to humankind, hunting retailers must

market their products and services in ways that reach modern hunters or would-be hunters. That means your efforts must be online, digital, electronic, connected — whatever word you want to use that accounts for the current and future reality of marketing communications. But even if you already conduct a robust digital marketing program in your retail business, here are a few tips to keep in mind across four key digital marketing areas.

1. KEEP YOUR WEBSITE (AND ALL ITS RELATED DATA) UP TO DATE

At this point, it goes without saying that your retail business has a website. If you don't, you pretty much don't exist. Virtually everyone who has been interested in anything — this includes hunters who are shopping for gear, just to choose one of your target markets — has thought or uttered the phrase, "Let's check out their website." "Their website" could be your website — likely the first "face" of your business for any customer who wants to know more about you.

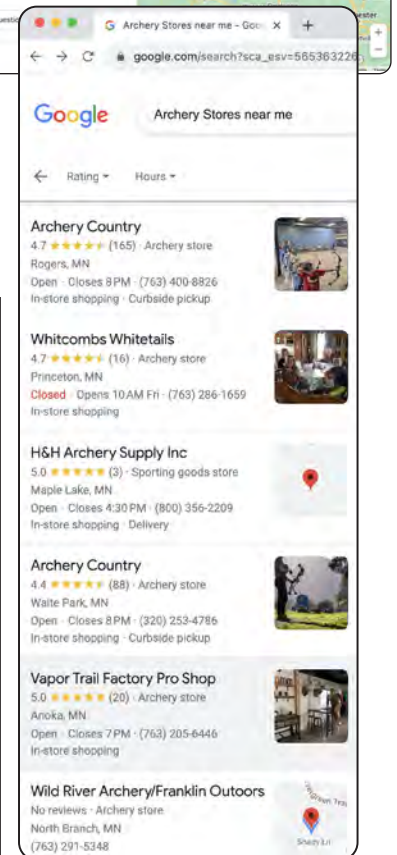
Two website "places" you need to concern yourself with: Your actual website, of course, but also where and how your website description shows up in search engine results. For the latter, search for your company or business name on Google or Bing or some other search engine and see where you show up in the list of results. Ideally it's one of the first



↑ Don't forget to keep track of what your competitors are doing online, too.

five or so results. If not, your website may need some search engine optimization (SEO) or other keyword or indexing help. Regardless of its ranking, once you see your company or business name in the search results, note what other information shows up near it — nothing, a tag line, a site description, the first words of the home page? This extra text is important and varies based on how your website is set up. But it can be changed, and here's a quick exercise to make the point on its importance.

Consider which of the following is the more effective search result when searching for "Scooter & Wanda's Hunting Emporium" (what I hope is a fictional hunting retailer name):



SCOOTER & WANDA'S HUNTING EMPORIUM

Scooter and Wanda's hunting | home page description | insert phone number here | hunting retailers and supplies

SCOOTER & WANDA'S HUNTING EMPORIUM

Let Scooter and Wanda outfit you for your next hunting trip! Experts with over 20 years of hunting experience! Call 800-555-1212 or email the store at staff@scooterwandahunting.com.

I'm guessing Scooter and Wanda's potential customers would be far more inclined to choose the second search result listing over the first. So what do internet searchers see when they search for your business?

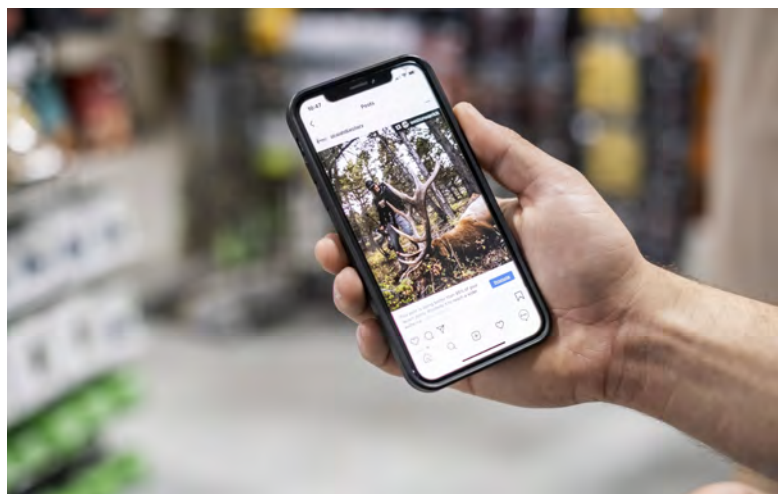
In addition to where and how your company or business name appears in search engine results, your actual website, of course, needs to provide an excellent experience for every potential reader. Key items to keep in mind here are how fast the site loads (faster is better), its optimization for mobile (meaning the site changes layout to provide easier reading if some-

one is viewing it on their smartphone vs. the larger monitor of a desktop or laptop computer), and how easy it is to navigate. And, of course, the site should provide clean copy and great images and useful information that's accurate and up to date!

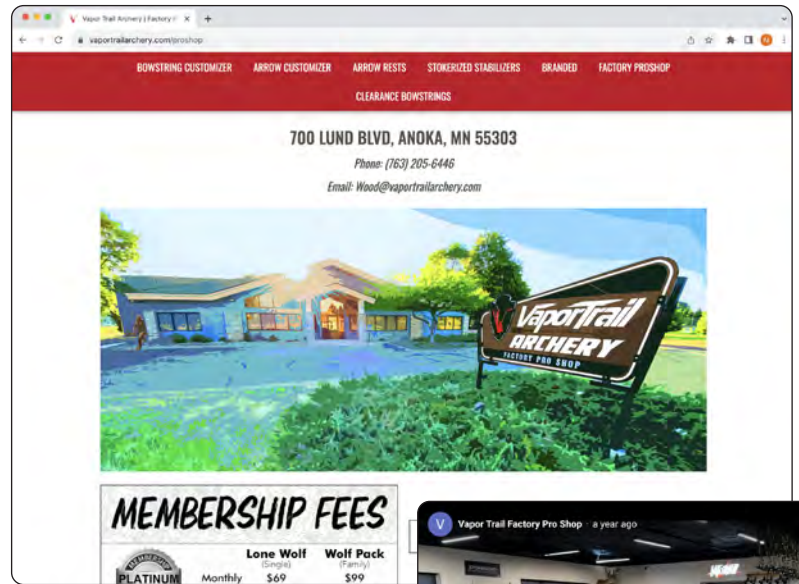
2. START AND MAINTAIN A BLOG

A blog is usually a separate page or part of your website on which you provide regularly-updated content — articles, videos, infographics and more — related to your business and, most importantly, useful to your readers. The blog content differs from the other website content in type of content (more educational content vs overt marketing content) and frequency of update (more frequent). The blog should replace any "news" page on your website and should broaden to include less marketing- or sales-related content and offer more that is instructional or helpful to readers. Here are a few ways to differentiate the types and purpose of some content for your website and your blog:

- A website should provide product



↑ Social media marketing is its own category these days, but you should at least be active on the social platform your shoppers (and potential shoppers) use most.

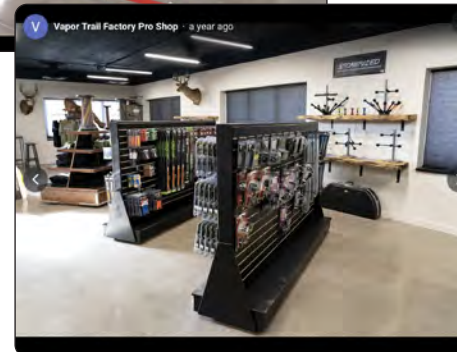
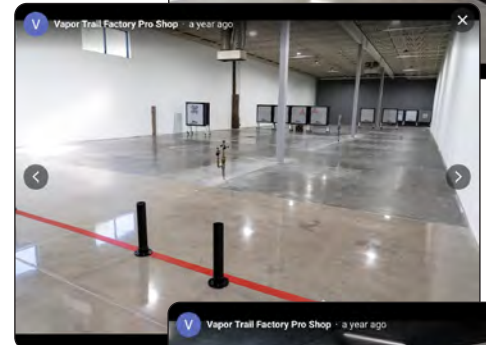
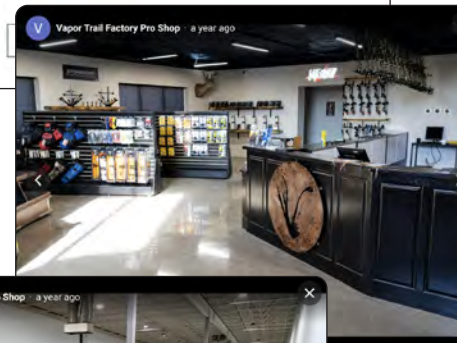


↑ Don't forget your own website is one of your top digital marketing tools. Is it up to date and useful?

data; a blog should provide information on how to use those products, comparisons, etc.

- A website should provide information about the company and its history; a blog can provide this as well, but in multiple posts that provide greater details, personal anecdotes, etc.
- A website should provide frequently asked questions and answers about products, sales, shipping, warranty and more. A blog should provide inside information about how products are made and tested, customer testimonials, and more personal stories related to the products and services offered.

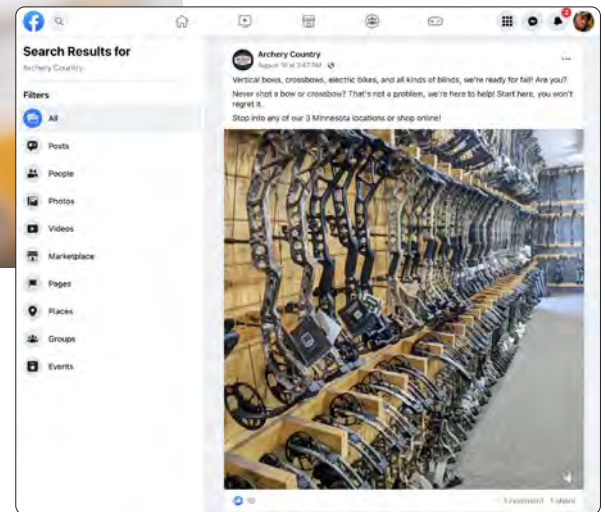
Here's the key: Websites with active blogs generally rank better in search engine results and give the appearance (online) of the company being alive and active, willing to relay





← If your site offers e-commerce, make sure it's fast and secure, and market it on your site and to your email list.

↓ What do potential customers find when they search for you on social or on an internet search engine?



stories and information to readers, and attempting to build trust with readers by offering content not tied directly to an offer or coupon or discount.

3. COMMUNICATE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

You should be posting on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, BeReal, TikTok, LinkedIn and other social media platforms — but only if you can tangibly prove that your posts are providing the appropriate return on investment. Otherwise, choose just one or maybe two social media platforms and focus on those. Social media platforms are great marketing tools IF they connect you and your company with customers and potential customers. This may take some trial and error, patience, and a willingness to change. In other words, don't post only on Facebook because you happen to already be on Facebook. Your older customers may be; your younger customers may be elsewhere.

Recommended content for social media — as a means to market your

products and services — includes videos, photos and information about your business. This might include a video of an informal tour of your company, a short clip of an employee fulfilling an order, or videos or pictures of a company event. Keep it simple by using the camera on your mobile phone. Just keep the video short (30 seconds is great, but up to two to three minutes max) and well choreographed. Or, post well-composed photos of your staff using the products or services you sell. Make sure you have appropriate permissions in place and be sure to include a link to your website as a part of the photo or video caption.

Social media posts can be just simple text, too — but try to make them interactive. Offer a link to an online poll you create and see what your readers are thinking on a particular matter — serious or fun. Ask readers to submit their experiences with your products or services to an email address and then report on what you heard a week later. Whenever a new blog post goes up, announce it in a social media post with a link

to the new blog content. The idea is to provide via social media a variety of content that engages readers, getting their attention and getting them to respond or share in their own social media feeds.

4. ELEVATE YOUR EMAIL MARKETING EFFORTS

Every now and then you probably get marketing emails. Some you open and some you don't. Consider: What email subject lines capture your attention, causing you to open and read? What "from: address piques your interest? What emails do you actually look forward to receiving and opening? These facets of email marketing — what works for you in your email inbox — may be worth considering for your company's email marketing efforts, too.

In fact, you should be sending out marketing emails that, for your current and yet-to-be customers, drive traffic back to your website or into

your store. Plenty of resources exist for how to start an email marketing program, but the key features include the following: capture customer and potential customer emails, use a good email marketing tool such as Constant Contact or MailChimp, and know your readers and communicate with them in a way that truly serves them.

To get email addresses, ask for them on your website, in your social media feeds and in your store. In exchange, offer truly useful content such as coupons or expert advice — this is where the blog (#2) comes in handy. Offer anyone you email the opportunity to easily unsubscribe and resubscribe — in other words, never spam anyone and follow proper email marketing etiquette. Finally, communicate systematically: with regularity and purpose, care and patience. **HR**



Hiring Strategy: How to Play the Negotiation Game

If your best candidate counters your wage offer, do you negotiate or keep interviewing?

BY JUDY KNEISZEL

If your business is booming and you need to add staff, or you've had an employee resign, you face the challenge of attracting someone who will be a good fit for your company. They also need to be a good fit for your payroll budget. So what do you do if you find the perfect candidate who could step right into the position, but they won't accept the job at the salary you are offering? Do you negotiate? Or just move on to No. 2 on the list of applicants?

WHY IS THIS HAPPENING?

When the U.S. unemployment rate topped 10 percent in 2009, most applicants were thrilled to get any job and accepted the wages offered. But these days, the unemployment rate is considerably lower, and you might be having a hard time finding workers.

While lower unemployment may be good news for the overall economy, it could mean your job offer isn't the only one on the table for an applicant and he or she may want to negotiate.

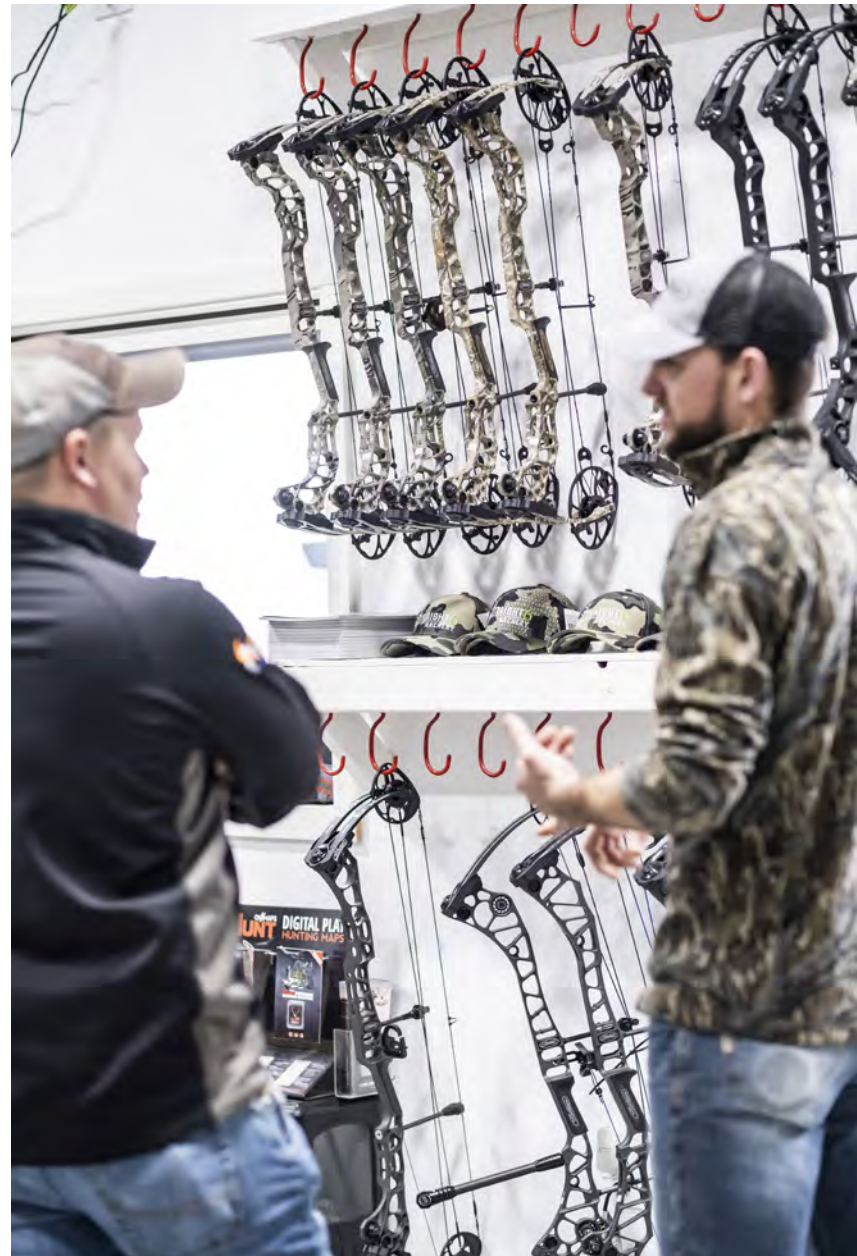
DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Before you even advertise that you have an opening, evaluate what you are paying current employees to help determine how much you are prepared to offer the new person.

Don't mislead a qualified applicant into thinking the job's salary is significantly higher than it really is in hopes that once they meet you, see your operation and learn about your company they will jump at whatever you offer. Sure, you've got a wonderful company, but their initial infatuation will quickly change to resentment if they aren't offered what they think they are worth.

Two websites can help you determine the going rate for the job you are offering. The Bureau of Labor Statistics provides national hourly and salary wage estimates for about 800 occupations based on surveys it conducts. You can even narrow down the information by geography. Similarly, the "Salary Wizard" at Salary.com has a searchable database of salaries by job title and location.

This information is easy to access, so obviously job applicants can look it up too and will know if you are low-balling them. Even if they don't know when they take the job, it probably won't take them long to figure out if you pay significantly less than the going rate in your area. While it may save you some



money initially, if the job market continues to be strong, you could very well lose the new employee and maybe some old ones to the competition in the next couple years if you pay significantly less than the going rate.

Once you've determined where the going rate intersects with what your company can afford, you've got two choices: either decide that your first offer will be your final offer, or come

up with an offer that has some wiggle room in case the candidate wants to negotiate. Once you know what the going pay rate is for the job you are advertising and factor in how high you can actually afford to go, you can devise an initial offer. If you did your homework, your starting point for negotiations shouldn't be too far from where both you and the employee would be happy.



If you are willing to negotiate, know your absolute top limit and be prepared to let the prospect walk away.

HOW IMPORTANT IS THIS JOB?

When determining a wage offer for a particular candidate, ask yourself these questions:

- Are other, equally qualified candidates available if this applicant says no? If the answer is yes, you have the upper hand.
- Has the job been difficult to fill? Are market conditions making finding and recruiting suitable candidates challenging? If yes, the job applicant has leverage.

If you've invested time and money in this candidate, you may want to increase your offer. On the other hand, if he or she has been unemployed for a long time, there's a good chance the applicant will accept an initial offer. Someone with a lot of experience or particularly valuable training and skills may demand higher pay than someone just starting out.

Also keep in mind that if the candidate would have to relocate for the job or commute a long distance every day, it could increase the salary required to lure them to your company.

HOW TO NEGOTIATE

If you've made your final wage offer, there are ways to further encourage a potential employee to sign on. Take a cue from the sports world and offer a signing bonus. This is an up-front, one-time cash payment given to an employee at the start of employment, independent of salary. To the employee, it might help defray the costs of taking a new job. For the employer, it shows the seriousness of the job offer without altering the company's salary structure.

Flexible scheduling is another incentive that doesn't affect salary. It



won't cost you anything, but it tells a potential employee you value them as a person and understand if they need to work around a spouse's schedule, kids' activities, an aging parent's medical appointments or other special circumstances that could cause them to hesitate about taking the job.

Don't make promises you can't keep, however, or you'll create resentment. For example, don't dangle a possible year-end bonus in front of an applicant in order to get them to agree to a lower wage if you've got no intention of following through on a bonus. Don't suggest that a starting wage is only temporary until the candidate proves his or her worth if you have no intention of actually giving them a raise after a probationary period.

BEWARE THE BIDDING WAR

Maybe the perfect candidate walked through the door after a sad parade

of grossly unqualified job seekers, and you know he would be an asset to your company. You make an offer and it's rejected. You strongly suspect he's negotiating with the competition, so you up your offer again and again and again because your competitiveness kicked in and you want to win. Stop yourself before you make an offer so out of line with existing pay levels for comparable positions at your company that it causes turmoil.

A certain degree of pay equity among co-workers doing the same job creates an environment of teamwork and fairness. If you get carried away in negotiations and offer a candidate wages significantly higher than the company's existing pay scale, you risk hurting staff morale if other employees find out. While you'd like to think employees are discreet, this type of information can leak out.

If a job candidate's demands are

significantly higher than what you are currently paying, either those demands or your current pay structure is out of line. Accept that the candidate may reject the job offer or face the fact that you need to bring everyone else up to scale.

If you do choose to negotiate with a potential employee and end up paying more than you initially offered, don't resent the employee down the road for costing more. It was ultimately your decision. The fact that your new employee was a well-prepared and confident negotiator means he or she will be a well-prepared and confident employee. That's just the kind of person you want on your team.

Yes, negotiating can be stressful for both parties. The only way to start this new employer/employee relationship off on the right foot is for both of you to be satisfied when you seal the deal. **HR**



THERMALS



LIFT SALES

Get familiar with the optics your customers need to hunt the night.

BY BRIAN MCCOMBIE



I scanned the far brush line near a southeastern-Texas watering hole using a small night vision unit, waiting and hoping. Less than 10 minutes later, a good-sized boar poked his head out of the brush, paused and then made straight for the water.

I had an Armasight Contractor 25 thermal rifle scope mounted onto my Henry lever action, the rig sitting on shooting sticks. I got the hog lined up in the Contractor 25's objective lens while my hunting guide made grunting noises to try to stop the animal. But the boar either didn't hear the grunts or was too thirsty to care and kept trotting very purposefully toward the water, his body appearing mostly red in the thermal's rear, ocular lens.

The hog was still moving when I took my shot at 80 yards, the Contractor 25's reticle lined up just below the hog's ear. Down went the boar!

The next night, I bagged a coyote with the same setup plus helped a fellow hunter with a follow-up shot on a running and wounded cow nilgai, a free ranging exotic found in much of southeastern Texas.

Yes, it was all legal, the night hunting of hogs, coyote and exotics being a common hunting method in Texas.



But it isn't only Texas. Numerous other states have made the night hunting of hogs and coyotes legal as populations of both species have swelled to rather alarming numbers. This has helped spur a growing market for thermal rifle scopes and handheld thermal monoculars.

The question for the independent FFL in those states that allow night hunting: Should you consider offering thermals to your customers?

↑ Since thermals detect heat, the units can also be used during the day. Here, Brian McCombie is zeroing a RICO MK1 thermal scope.

True, thermals can be very pricey, and these high-tech units will require some education for hunters and retailers alike. James Munn of ATN says sales associates take to thermal readily, and the company even offers "quite a bit of training materials, from PowerPoints to how-to videos and online classes to help get stores up to speed quickly." Plus, the profit margins are good, and the selection of thermal options has never been better. Demand for these units keeps growing, too, as attested to by the number of companies making and selling them. And social media appears to be a huge help in continuing to drive up the popularity of thermal night hunting.

A DECADE OF THERMAL

I've used and reviewed thermal optics for just over a decade now, and when I first started doing so, I knew the technology was something special,

just the thing for hunting wild hogs and coyotes at night, the time these species are most active. Thermal, for me and others, essentially created a whole new hunting opportunity.

For the hunter, thermal units were also great scouting accessories, and I've used these optics to find game that ran into thick vegetation and forested areas. Thermal also aids the deer hunter entering the wood at Zero-Dark-Thirty. Now, he or she can first scan the area for deer as opposed to busting up bedded animals.

Thermal also has many law enforcement applications, from game wardens tracking down night-time poachers to police and private security scanning for trespassers and doing general surveillance.

Impressed though I was with the technology, I assumed the relatively high price points of thermal would make these very much niche items, with thermal scopes often running

Night Vision Isn't Thermal

Sometimes, the terms "thermal" and "night vision" are used interchangeably, and consumers can think thermal and night vision optics are the same. In fact, thermal and night vision units represent two very different technologies.

As noted, thermal units detect heat sources and translate that heat information into images.

Night vision units, though, take whatever ambient light is available (moon, starlight, etc.), and digitally amplify that light to present the user with an image. Night vision can also be paired with an IR Illuminator, an infrared device, with the IR Illuminator providing the necessary light to make the night vision work. Which also means in total and complete darkness night vision units will not "see" any better than the human eye.



upwards of \$10,000 at the time and handheld spotting units going for \$5,000 to \$6,000. I was wrong.

DRIVING THE MARKET

Certain changes were just starting to make themselves felt a decade ago, and they continue to drive the thermal revolution today.

First, even as the technology of these thermal units improved, prices steadily came down. The \$10,000 thermal scope of the past can be had for half of that today, with many more features, and the features are more user-friendly than ever.

Meantime, the number of feral hogs has skyrocketed in so many parts of the country. The monetary damage done by these four-footed roto-rooters to agriculture and landowners is staggering, with various sources placing the cost at over \$1.5 billion annually.

This reality caused many state legislatures and game agencies to allow for night hunting of these non-native hogs and the use of high-tech optics for such hunting.

Credit social media and internet videos for some of the increased popularity of these thermal units, too. Many thermals have the ability to record video, and night hunting videos were soon (and still are) found all over the Internet and social media. The videos not only alerted people to the efficiency of this technology; they provided a kind of video game quality to the hunting experience that many have flocked to.

Add it all up and the net result is more companies than ever offering thermal optics, at lower prices, and for units that are easier to use with each passing year.

IN-STORE SALES

Standard features on thermal rifle scopes include various reticle op-

Looking at Options

Among the top companies making and selling thermals:

ARMASIGHT: In addition to the Contractor thermals constructed with ARMACore 320x240 sensors, Armasight recently released its newest line of 640x480 thermal units, including the 640 Contractor and the Collector 640 Compact scope (shown). Also makes clip-ons, handhelds and a host of thermal accessories. armasight.com



ATN: The ThOR 5XD is ATN's latest generation of ThOR thermal scopes and offers more power and memory, the latest sensors, and custom chips. A high-resolution OLED display gives you blacker blacks and richer colors. It also features upgraded lenses, enhanced algorithms to provide sharp resolution and image quality, and a new Quad Core processor with enhanced sensors for stunning image quality in both night and day. www.atncorp.com



INFIRAY OUTDOOR: Many consider the InfiRay Outdoor RICO MK1 rifle scope (shown) to be the best bargain today, combining a 640x480 sensor and impressive images with many other features, at thousands of dollars less than competition models. The company recently debuted the RS75, too, with its amazing 1280x1024 sensor. www.infirayoutdoor.com



PULSAR: Thermal scopes, compact scopes, handheld units, clip-ons and, yes, even thermal binoculars: Pulsar offers all of these products at a variety of price points. Among its newest offerings is the Thermion Duo DXP50, a scope that combines both a thermal sensor and a daytime optic into a single package. pulsar nv.com



TRIJICON: Well-known for its daytime optics, including the U.S. Military's ACOG, Trijicon also offers a full line of thermals, including various models within the company's REAP-IR Mini Thermal Rifle scopes and their top-of-the-line IR-Hunter scopes, plus a clip-on unit and a monocular. All are built with Trijicon's 640x480, 12-micron thermal image sensors. Shown: IR-Hunter 60-2 with a 60MM front lens. www.trijicon.com



tions, different color “palettes,” plus photograph and video capability. Higher-end models usually have Wi-Fi and Bluetooth capability for transferring those photos and videos. Most also offer digital zoom magnification.

Power sources range from 123 lithium batteries to rechargeable batteries manufactured for specific thermal units. Battery life can range anywhere from 2 to 6 hours, depending on the unit, and many thermal scopes have the ability to connect to a power pack.

Handheld units and clip-ons won't have the reticle options, of course, but can have most of the other features found on their scope cousins.

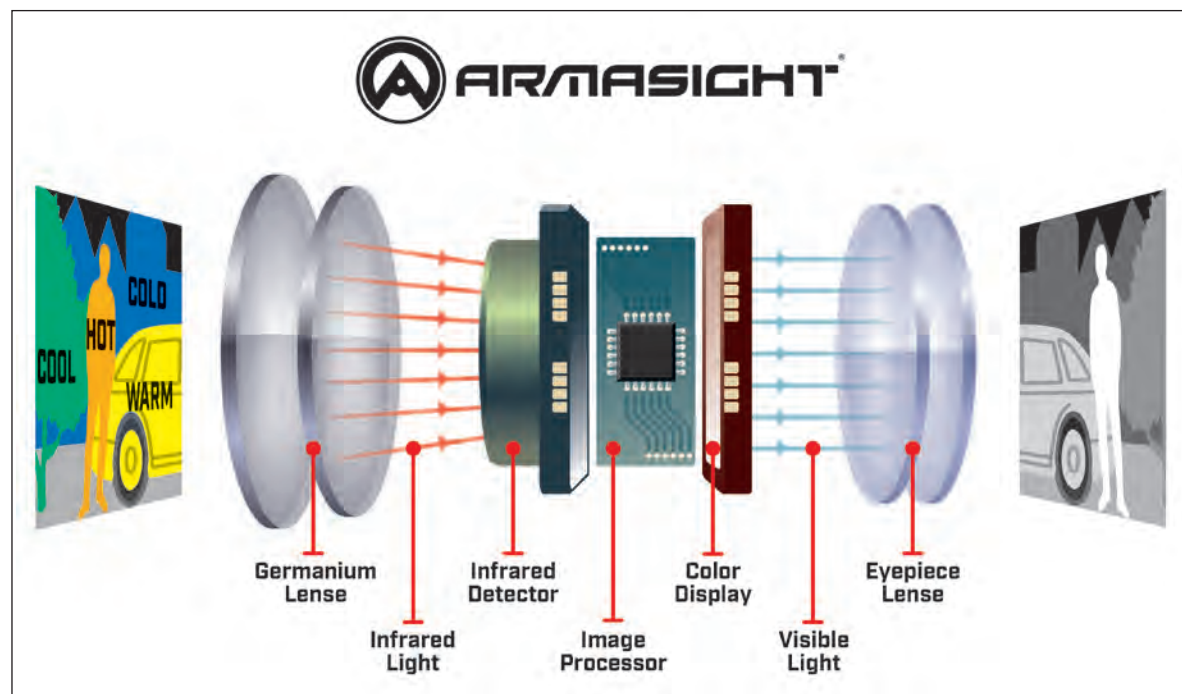
Darren Jones is the brand manager for Armasight, and regularly visits FFLs who carry or are considering carrying the company's thermal optics. While he admits that the higher price points of thermal do cause some hesitation for potential dealers, Jones adds that Armasight dealers can expect profit margins in the 20% range for his company's units.

“We have several dealers that will move upwards of \$2 to \$3 million in thermals per year, and that's for all brands, including ours,” Jones says.

Obviously, he added, these dealers have made a significant investment of time and energy to understand and know the various thermal brands and their features.

“The shops that get behind the brand, that are savvy about thermal and night vision do well with our products,” says Jones. “We can provide in-store signage, web-based and in-person training sessions, product support in the way of photos and spec sheets, and in-store sales support for demo days, too. When dealers approach us, we always try to support in some form or fashion.”

ATN's Munn says his company



↑ Basic operation of a thermal optic. Courtesy of Armasight.

hits the sweet spot of price and performance. “ATN digital and thermal products are a wise choice for retailers to stock because they bring innovation and versatility to the forefront, catering to the growing demand for cutting-edge technology and outdoor enthusiasts’ needs,” he says. “Our products not only offer superior performance in various conditions but also align with the modern consumer’s desire for high-quality, reliable solutions in the realm of optics and thermal imaging.”

InfiRay Outdoor is another major player in the current thermal market, offering a full line of thermal optics, including its popular RICO line of thermal rifle scopes.

Angelo Brewer, director of operations for iRAY USA, the U.S. distributor of InfiRay Outdoor, noted that profit margins for their thermals are right at that 20% level, too, with some stores doing even better.

“InfiRay Outdoor has a full suite of physical support collateral available to our dealers, such as banners,

POP displays (floor and counter), branded clothing, and what many describe as the best brochures in the industry,” Brewer says. “In addition to our physical support, we also offer a complete line of digital collateral and video content available on our dealer portal to support pre-sale marketing as well.”

Staff education about thermal will be a key to selling such products, and ATN, Armasight and InfiRay Outdoor are dedicated to providing this education. Jones noted that while staff can sometimes be a little leery of this new technology, the same staffers he works with quickly grasp the core ideas behind using and selling thermal units.

“Once they understand the basic concepts, counter staff find that the various intuitive features built into our units are very easy to use,” Jones says. “And showing potential customers the ease of using Armasight

thermals goes a long way to selling our products.”

Both companies sell their thermals direct to dealers and through industry distributors.

“Additionally, all of our dealers are listed on our website (irayusa.com) and we offer real-time dealer inventory availability directly on our product page as a benefit for stocking dealers,” Brewer notes.

“For a sporting goods store owner looking to explore the thermal and digital market and cater to their hunting customers, I recommend starting with a selection of ATN products that strike a balance between quality and affordability,” says Munn. “Consider stocking our flagship units like the newly released X-Sight 5 day/night digital scope and ATN Thor 5 thermal scopes, as well as accessories like mounting systems and batteries. Plus our entry-level thermal optics like the Thor-LTV can



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ACOG

provide your customers with a taste of the technology without breaking the bank. Remember, it's essential to offer a variety of options to cater to different budgets and preferences within the hunting community."

MORE TECH

Understanding every bit of thermal technology would warrant a book. Maybe two.

Fortunately, the genius science types developing this technology make it for end users, and hunters don't need a science Ph.D. to hunt hogs and yotes at night with thermal. Likewise, a retailer doesn't need a high-flying tech degree to sell these units.

But a basic understanding of some of the numbers and functions related



↑ McCombie with a Texas hog taken using an Armasight Collector 25 featuring a 320x240 sensor and a 25mm objective lens.



↑ A wild hog seen through a thermal scope with a 640x512 sensor. Thermal image provided by InfiRay Outdoor.

to thermal will help sell the units.

Thermal optics are actually cameras — digital cameras that detect electromagnetic radiation, what we non-scientists would term "heat." So, the front lens of a thermal unit detects that heat, and that information is run through a digital sensor or "core," which then projects the heat information to the rear or ocular lens as an image.

Of course, a great deal is going on from the front to the rear of a thermal. Again, that's book-length information. But understanding some

key points will be a big help from a sales point of view.

For consumer thermal optics, a 320x240 sensor was the baseline sensor for years and is still a very popular choice. A number of years ago, thermals built with 640x480 sensors came onto the scene. One big difference between the two sensors? Pixels.

Pixels are the very tiny, very sensi-

tive bits of information that make up a digital photograph or image. They are usually arranged in a two-dimensional grid. So, the 320x240 thermal sensor displays an image that is 320 pixels wide and 240 pixels high. Which means there are 76,800 pixels present in an image seen through a thermal optic using a 320x240 sensor.

A 640x480 unit has four times the number of pixels in the image versus a 320x240 unit, so the 640 sensor units in effect provide four times the information for much more detailed images. A 640 will usually have a larger objective lens than 320 units, too, and a larger objective plus quadruple pixels provides clearer images and a wider field of view.

Most thermal units are operated with a menu system. A button is pressed or a turret is turned to enter the main menu, and then the user scrolls down that menu to the various

applications within the unit.

For example, a thermal rifle scope will need to be zeroed. The user would enter the main menu and then scroll down the ZERO function and open it. Much like a daytime optic, many thermal scopes allow the user to move the bullet's point of impact by shifting the reticle's elevation and windage controls.

Most newer thermals I've used also let you take a shot or two at a target, and then shift the reticle to where the shots hit. Lock that reticle position into place, aim for the bullseye with the next shot and you should be right on target.

Show a potential customer the ease of using a thermal scope's zeroing process and let them tool through a few menus and scope out various heat sources in your store (like people, that spot on the floor in full sun, etc.), and you may well have just sold a thermal unit! **HR**



SUBMIT YOUR VOTES NOW ONLINE BY DECEMBER 31, 2023.

TACTICAL

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OFFICIAL BALLOT

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

	BRAND	MODEL
BINOCULAR		
RANGEFINDER		
SPOTTING SCOPE		
SUPPRESSOR		
SHOTGUN CHOKE TUBE		
SHOOTING STICKS		
SHOOTING BENCH		
SHOOTING TARGET		
GUN CLEANING PRODUCTS		
GUN CASE		
GUN SAFE		
GUN-MOUNTED BIPODS		
KNIFE		
BOOTS		
APPAREL		
NEW PRODUCT (Introduced in 2023) _____		
FAVORITE DISTRIBUTOR _____		
FAVORITE TACTICAL RETAILER ARTICLE/DEPARTMENT _____		
FAVORITE TR WRITER _____		
DID WE MISS ANY IMPORTANT CATEGORIES THAT SHOULD APPEAR IN NEXT YEAR'S CHOICE AWARDS? _____		

SUBMIT YOUR VOTES NOW ONLINE BY DECEMBER 31, 2023.

Gun Cleaning & Maintenance

Gun cleaning and maintenance items, as consumables, are a never-ending sales opportunity — but make sure your customers are buying what they really need.

BY DAVID REARICK

Gun maintenance, for most, ranks up there about as high as cleaning out the gutters. Simply put, it is easier to ignore and procrastinate rather than complete, and while it may not happen often, the results of improper maintenance generally show their face at the most inopportune moment. To ensure your customers' firearms remain in top shape, understanding the different levels of maintenance will go a long way to ensuring that failures are minimized.

Just like an automobile, most firearms can be put on a maintenance schedule. All vehicles come with a manufacturer's suggested maintenance schedule including everything from changing engine oil and spark plugs to adjusting a timing belt. These intervals of maintenance used to be based solely on mileage, but many are now based on sensors and algorithms that consider mileage, temperatures and other factors to inform the consumer more accurately when to complete maintenance without overdoing it. The bad news is firearms do not have this monitoring equipment but would benefit greatly from being put on a schedule, based on their frequency and harshness of use, to minimize unnecessary maintenance while keeping them in top condition.





Tipton Best Gun Vise



To better maintain the performance and condition of a firearm, there are three levels of gun maintenance that users should deploy: routine, preventative and invasive. As retailers, being armed with this information allows salespersons to better serve their customers by providing them with the tools consumers need to execute the tasks and to make the sale of secondary items, helping the bottom line.

ROUTINE MAINTENANCE

Routine maintenance is just as it sounds: It is maintenance that occurs regularly, and at the minimum, after every time the gun is handled in the field or at the range. While after-use is a good rule of thumb, users should also remember that their safe kings and queens need oiled regularly to minimize risks of corrosion.

WIPE DOWN: It goes without saying that oily-rag exterior wipe-downs should be completed after every gun is handled. This task can be handled with a soft rag and gun oil. For those who want something more portable, companies like Remington manufacture pre-packaged oily cloth wipes. These wipes are especially handy for hunters that travel, ensuring that moisture is displaced before a gun is stored in a gun case or sock.

While a quick wipe-down with gun oil will suffice for short periods, for guns that will see harsh conditions or be stored for long periods of time, the use of a Rig-Rag with Rig Universal Gun Grease will add a more robust layer of protection to exterior metal surfaces. While most consumers own gun oil of different types, most are not aware of the benefits of gun grease, and for blued guns, it really helps stave-off corrosion.

INTERNAL CLEANING: At a routine level, internal cleaning can be basic.



When it comes to internal components, they should be divided into two categories: barrels and actions.

BARRELS: For routine maintenance of barrels, a simple bore snake is a quick and easy way to remove any moisture and fouling and add a

protective coating of oil. Bore snakes include multiple components into one snake, including a soft “snake” to attract fouling, a soft brass brush to help knock off loose powder and debris, and a smaller-diameter pull rope that allows you to easily feed into them into the barrel. These can be used dry, but users can also add some bore cleaner to the front and oil to the back to improve cleaning efficiency. The only downside to bore snakes is they are caliber-specific, but companies like Otis and others make flexible kits like a bore snake, but with more multi-caliber functionality and bells and whistles.

ACTIONS: For routine action cleaning, that same oily rag can be used to wipe down the bolt and internal components. Additionally, a small syringe of gun grease can be used to add lubrication to the bolt lugs and other mechanical components to

↑ Some simple tools are helpful for disassembly and adjustments. In addition to cleaning and maintenance supplies, encourage customers to pick up a basic tool kit (and consult their firearms manual).

ensure their functionality. It should be noted that too much grease or oil can absolutely be a bad thing, so it should be done with moderation, generally adding a small amount, and then wiping it back off, allowing the oil/grease to spread into a very fine layer to build up. Additionally, those who hunt in sub-zero conditions should be aware that some oil/grease can freeze, so extra caution should be used for hunts in these conditions.

PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE

Preventative maintenance takes routine maintenance to the next step. All the above routine maintenance



actions remain in place, but users add additional steps to the process helping to ensure that barrels remain clear of fouling for consistency and actions remain smooth and operating like they did the day they were new. While gunpowders of today are non-corrosive and significantly cleaner-burning than those of the early 1900s, that doesn't mean that they don't leave residue and can attract buildup that causes actions to grind to a gritty halt. This level of maintenance should be done, at the minimum, after every other range day for the barrel and after every day in the field/hunting for the action. While firearms lack advanced sensors, users should gauge a firearm's level of need based on experience and severity of use. For instance, if you are hunting and it is raining, the guns needs a good dose of preventative maintenance when you get home.

BARRELS: Preventative barrel maintenance goes a step beyond bore snakes, though that doesn't mean that a snake can't be included. For most, barrel cleaning consists of metal or composite cleaning rods equipped with rags, bushes and jags in addition to bore-cleaning solvents and oils.



SOLVENTS: There is a plethora, maybe more than plethora, of gun-cleaning solvents available. Everyone, and rightfully so, loves the smell of Hoppe's No. 9, and it certainly has done the job for many years, but ask 10 different gun maintenance freaks what their favorite gun solvent is, and you likely get five or six different answers. The main things users should consider when selecting a solvent is the solvent's ability to remove lead, copper and powder fouling and how it is to be

applied/used for best results. While solvents remove different levels of each contaminant, understanding the proper way to use them is what makes them effective. Simply put, some require more interaction to be effective, while others are simple to use, but potentially less effective, their type and use-case depending on the severity of the fouling. Additionally, consumers should not be afraid to use more than one solvent during the cleaning process. This is especially true for firearms that use a lot of lead ammunition or shotguns with plastic wads, as lead/plastic can build up and fill/file the barrel's bore.

The main goal of solvent-based cleaning on a rifle's bore is to clean out fouling, including lead, copper, and powder or plastic residue, to keep a bore clean and as close to "new" as possible. "Fouled" barrels can lead to inaccuracy as the bore's rifling continues to gather additional fouling over time. While there is a balance between having too clean and too dirty of a bore, it remains important to occasionally clean a barrel back down to clean metal to ensure that corrosion isn't given a suitable environment to form.

In terms of selling these solvents, it is important to make it clear that some solvents are used for different reasons and that the user needs to clean out more than just powder residue to be effective. That is why it is important to use solvents, not just oils, that remove lead, copper and plastic fouling and to use fresh solvents on clean patches until they stop coming out of the barrel "dirty."

OILS: While some solvents include rust-inhibiting properties, users should run a lightly oiled patch down the barrel once the solvent patches come out "clean." This will add a layer of protection to the raw steel, helping to stave off any surface corrosion that may occur during storage. This includes both carbon and stainless-steel barrels alike.

ACCESSORIES: It goes without saying that protecting your gun's bore, crown, rifling and chamber is of paramount importance during cleaning. As such, always use materials that are softer than those that you are cleaning (nylon and brass is softer than steel) and be careful when entering and exiting the bore to not damage the sensitive crown and chamber areas. Bore guides, nylon brushes and composite rods are all a good starting point. Tipton makes a universal bore guide that not only protects critical components, but also keeps solvents and debris out of the action.

ACTIONS: Preventative maintenance on actions goes beyond simple wipes-downs, adding nylon brushes and chamber-cleaning supplies. For most end-users, cleaning out the gun's chamber and/or brushing out the action is far down on their priority list. The reason this area is often overlooked is a lack of general knowledge on how the gun can be disassembled. For rifles, it is important to show your buyers how to remove the bolt to allow a chamber-cleaning



All-in-one kits with rods, brushes, solvents and oil are a great starting point for new gun owners — and they make great gifts for family members shopping for a gun enthusiast.



brush access to the action and for a nylon brush to knock out/down any dirt/buildup. By being able to remove the bolt, users can then add lubrication to critical points to keep their rifles in perfect working order.

For shotguns, without getting invasive, there are action cleaners that are good at breaking down residue; however, they can also damage gun stock finish, so use with caution. For a quick and safer way to clean out actions, compressed air, either canned or from a home compressor, will help dislodge gunk and debris. While that will work for a short period, more invasive cleaning is required, especially for semi-automatics, to ensure reliability.

INVASIVE MAINTENANCE

In many cases, invasive maintenance may be better left to gunsmiths, but that doesn't mean it can't be done by those with some mechanical skill. This type of maintenance aims to really break down the rifle into more individual components for a more thorough cleaning. The good news is that all of the info required to complete this task is available on Google and/or YouTube, allowing the end users something far superior to a reference manual. This type of maintenance should be done, at the minimum, on a yearly basis for casual users. For users who hunt or use their firearms in hard conditions or compete in competitive shooting competitions, the frequency could increase to every six months or after X number of uses, based on personal experience.

BARRELS: For barrels, this level of maintenance was previously completed using an electro-chemical system like Outer's Foul Out Bore Cleaning System, but this system has been discontinued. While there are replacement systems out there, most



← Encourage customers to keep a few basic cleaning and maintenance supplies in their range bag. Wipes and a bottle or can of oil are particularly handy.

are not applicable to hunting store retailers. That said, these systems are a good option for cleaning dirty and neglected firearm barrels, so it is good ammunition to have in your back pocket if someone brings in a "smooth" rifled barrel and asks for assistance. There are also some other, more specialized systems for lead and plastic, but they are made for very specific use cases.

ACTIONS: For rifles, to conduct a thorough cleaning, it is important to strip down a rifle's bolt to clean the firing pin and other internal components. Users will be very surprised about what gets inside a bolt body, and most bolts can be disassembled with some simple tools. Again, Google is your buyer's friend here. Once disassembled, a nylon brush, some solvent, a cotton brush/swab, and some oil are all that is required. Just make sure not to overdo the oil. While this can be accomplished by a handy person, it does require some skill.

For shotguns, disassembly can be more complicated. Some firearm manufacturers have seen the need for easier levels of disassembly, especial-



ly for semi-automatics that require high levels of cleanliness to operate flawlessly, but it still can appear overwhelming to the consumer. It is important for all users to understand how their firearm's action be easily disassembled, not just for cleaning, but in case of a malfunction. Armed with this information, during preventative maintenance cycles, user can disassemble their actions and use a nylon brush, dipped in solvent, to clean out any debris and residue. Aerosols Gun Scrubber is also effective at cleaning out debris, breaking down residue, and cleaning out gunk.

Once the brushing and/or Gun Scrubber treatment has completed, a light coat of oil should be wiped onto the action to help resist corrosion, but it shouldn't be overdone. While oil is good for lubrication, oil is also great at capturing and retaining dirt and residue that can lead to mechanical failures.

By preparing your consumer to maintain their firearm, you are not only assuring a lifetime of carefree use for the user, but also making the extra sale of critical items that the users will need throughout the life of the firearm. **HR**



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Patterns of Performance

Consumers base their camouflage choices on brand loyalty, terrain, pursuit, garment performance and simple eye appeal. Allocating floor and shelf space for styles means deciding how to weigh each of these.

BY KEVIN TATE





“We’re in Mossy Oak country,” says Lee Oaks, of Lonnie’s Sporting Goods in Corinth, Mississippi. “If it’s not Mossy Oak, it doesn’t sell well for us. We do sell some Realtree, but Mossy Oak’s Bottomland and Greenleaf outsell other patterns significantly for us.”

Lonnie’s Sporting Goods sits only a couple hours’ drive from the small Mississippi town where Mossy Oak was born, the one it still calls home. The company’s humble beginnings, paired with its decision to stay in its hometown once it was large enough to do otherwise, engenders strong feelings among its following. Its competitors enjoy similar standings among their own home communities as well.

Brand loyalty is an interesting aspect of marketing. Geographic proximity to each establishment’s headquarters comes into effect for camouflage giants Mossy Oak and Realtree, based in West Point, Mississippi, and Columbus, Georgia, respectively. True Timber Camo, based in Spartanburg, South Carolina, holds a strong footprint along the East Coast. Beyond local geographic relevance, each of these camouflage patterns approaches the job of concealment in two distinct ways.



REALISM REALIZED

Modern hunting camouflage traces its lineage to Jim Crumley’s Treebark, born in 1979, and to Realtree and Mossy Oak, which both appeared some five years later. All three sought to improve upon military surplus

clothing, then the only option for hunters who hoped to disappear in the outdoors. Invention of all three brands and their various patterns preceded digital imaging and the modern fabric printing technology that allows such images to be reproduced on clothing today. The first patterns for all three were hand-drawn. The camouflage revolution that spanned the two decades that followed sought to improve upon that with each successive iteration. The movement ultimately created camouflage patterns featuring leaves and limbs as realistic to the eye any two-dimensional image will allow.

The avalanche of improvements tracked directly with the advent and growth of computer-aided design and with the development of photo manipulation software. These also coincided with improvements in print-



ing technology for fabric, and for the heat transfer paper and films used to decorate the assortment of hard and soft goods that fill stores today.

A CAMO FOR ALL SEASONS

A generation of hunters later, the camouflage conversation has come full circle. The market has split into two distinct directions and has added

“Today’s camo giants typically offer at least one umbrella pattern, a number of niche patterns, and one or more digitally generated or inspired patterns.”



an important third byway, one that returns to the mid-1980s and modern camo's beginnings. Today's camo giants typically offer at least one umbrella pattern, a number of niche patterns, and one or more digitally generated or inspired patterns. The umbrella patterns are useful in a wide variety of terrains. The niche patterns are photorealistic and are dedicated to specific terrains and pursuits — duck blinds focusing on marshland, hardwood trees for early whitetail bow applications, sage and stone combinations for the Mountain West — plus digitally created or inspired patterns that don't attempt photorealism but use shades and colors to approximate a terrain.

Interestingly enough, these latter digital patterns sprang to popularity



from the emergence of modern military patterns — desert camouflage that came around to resume its place in the pantheon of outdoor pursuits. Camo as a statement of fashion has always been a consideration for consumers. When the U.S. Army's digital desert tans turned up in surplus stores, a new avenue for the camo conversation opened.

LET'S GO RETRO

Perhaps most significantly, the retro movement sweeping America's camo consumers should be of particular interest to retailers. This development began with social media trends and countless Throwback Thursdays online. The appeal of Mossy Oak's Bottomland pattern and Realtree's original eponymous edition never really went away. A number of hunters eschewed the camo arms race and stuck with the simple, hand-drawn or painted patterns that helped start it all. In the late 2010s, the online auction house ebay.com became a place hunters and outdoor enthusiasts of all ages avidly bought and sold hunting garments that were then up to 25 years old. They sought these specifically for the old patterns they carried — versions left behind in the technologically driven chase for a better way to hide. A number of each company's original licensees had continued to produce products in the old patterns, so consumer recognition of these designs did not disappear. Now these patterns have sparked new interest with young hunters, because the patterns are both old and new at once.

Today, both Mossy Oak and Realtree dedicate a significant portion of their marketing efforts to fueling the fire beneath the resurgence of these patterns' popularity. Both now promote a number of garments and products printed in these patterns.

HIGH PERFORMANCE, POWERFUL PREFERENCE

"Sitka is a whole different client," Oaks says, and that short statement goes a long way toward separating the conversation.

Sitka is a player in the camouflage conversation because they're a player in the high-performance garment market. High-performance



garments are designed for service in extreme conditions and are favored in the non-consumptive outdoor market among mountain hikers, rock climbers, mountain bikers, backpack campers and others who want to be equipped to seek out difficulties in terrain, weather, altitude and more. Whether they actually do seek such extremes is immaterial — the fact they go forth dressed and equipped to do so is a statement that helps define not only what they do, but the way they see themselves and the way they want to be seen. This psychology of camo marketing has always had its place in the business, but the high-performance garment industry is helping drive this to much greater



heights. The high-performance garment market intersects with elements of the hunting market, and it is at this intersection that Sitka first planted its flag. What began as clothing decorated in a proprietary camo pattern and marketed to sheep hunters has spread to include a much wider variety of pursuits. In every case, the high-performance garments are suitable for nature's extremes. Markets have grown beyond sheep hunting and now include mule deer and elk as well as waterfowl and more.

RUNWAY RUNAWAY

These garments' desirability as a fashion statement helps distinguish the line as well. Patterns from the major camouflage innovators mentioned earlier are available on the widest imaginable variety of products. Gear decorated in these brands spans the absolute limits of the market in quality and price point. From the cheapest disposable lighter to the most expensive firearm or UTV, these patterns are designed and produced specifically to be

indistinguishable from one application to the next. Standardization in the various decorating processes means a consumer's pants match his shirt, which match his gun, which matches his bow, which matches his UTV. It also means his lowest-quality, least-expensive garments match his highest-quality, most-expensive garments when they're all purchased in the same pattern.

The drawback in this quality control and supply chain achievement, at least from a marketing standpoint, is very straight forward. Consumers who want those who see them to equate the quality of the gear they're wearing with their commitment and prowess as a hunter have more difficulty making that unspoken statement if the camo pattern in question does not set them apart. At a glance, a lightweight pair of cotton pants and a long sleeve t-shirt that, together, might sell for \$70, look just like much higher-quality gear that may sell for 10 times as much or more.

Buyers of Sitka products don't have that problem, because the opportunity for such confusion doesn't exist. While a rack of Sitka clothing represents quite a sizeable investment, it's something for every retailer to consider, weighing not only current clientele, but the retailer's greater market reach beyond. Sitka speaks to a different client, one worth attracting for their spending power alone.

What's the bottom line in camo these days? There's no one hot pattern we can tell you to stock. The really old-school stuff is still selling to customers who love the "vintage" look. The high-tech digital stuff sells well to an entirely different consumer, and the in-between, run-of-the-mill basic photorealistic patterns are probably going to remain your bread and butter. Match the terrain in your area and the season with a handful of patterns, ask customers what they're looking for, and you should keep the majority of shoppers happy. **HR**



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

	BRAND	MODEL
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RANGEFINDER		
SPOTTING SCOPE		
SUPPRESSOR		
SHOTGUN CHOKE TUBE		
HOLSTERS		
SHOOTING STICKS		
SHOOTING BENCH		
SHOOTING TARGET		
GUN CLEANING PRODUCTS		
GUN CASE		
GUN SAFE		
GUN-MOUNTED BIPODS		
BOOTS		
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BY KEVIN TATE





Hunt Savers: Better Socks and Gloves

Cold fingers and toes will ruin a hunt faster than almost anything else, but the right socks and gloves can keep your shoppers in the field all day.

ACE LUCIANO

Cold hands and feet have ruined more outdoor excursions than any other piece of gear. They are the first thing to get cold in the field and often seem to be the last thing to warm up when back at home.

Cold hands and feet are also the number one areas treated for frostbite. How many times have you heard or personally experienced the following scenario?

Imagine sitting in a deer stand, waiting for the buck of a lifetime to step out. You were there before daylight and have been sitting motionless for several hours. On the walk in, you worked up a little bit of a sweat, but you've since cooled down.

It starts with a little bit of tingling in your toes. You wiggle them a little bit, and that seems to help. An hour later, you are miserable and cold. To make matters worse, the gloves you bought from the local hardware store have become wet from clearing the snow off of your stand platform. Your hands are cold. Your feet are cold. Though your body is well insulated and warm, your latest time in the stand has become an exercise in misery and a battle of wills. Will you leave? Stay? Just one more half hour...

But 15 minutes later, you're ready

to jump out of the tree.

All of this could have been avoided if you had all of the proper gear — not just your coat and bibs.

Outdoor and sporting goods retailers have a unique opportunity to provide their customers with a wide range of products that are essential for outdoor activities. While many retailers focus on items such as firearms, bows, tents, backpacks, and other large items, it's important not to overlook smaller, yet every bit as important items such as socks and gloves. In this article, we will explore why outdoor and sporting goods retailers, including firearms retailers, should sell quality socks and gloves, and some of the benefits that come from doing so.

First and foremost, socks and gloves are essential items for outdoor activities. Whether your customers are hunting, hiking, skiing, or just spending time outdoors in cold weather, socks and gloves are crucial to keeping their hands and feet warm and dry. In fact, not having the right socks and gloves can make or break an outdoor adventure. Cold, wet feet or hands can quickly ruin an otherwise enjoyable activity, while warm, dry feet and hands can help your customer stay comfortable and enjoy their selected outdoors activity for longer periods of time.

Socks and gloves are also relatively inexpensive items that offer a high return on investment — for the customer and the retailer alike. While firearms and optics, a good pair of hiking boots or a high-end tent can cost hundreds or even thousands of dollars, socks and gloves are typically a much more affordable purchase. This means that retailers can stock up on a variety of styles and sizes without breaking the bank, and customers can easily purchase multiple items without having to spend a significant

Photo: Bill Konway



amount of money. They can even turn into impulse purchases.

Another reason why retailers should sell socks and gloves is that they are easy to merchandise.

Space in your retail business is finite, but unlike larger items such as tents or guns, socks and gloves can be easily displayed in small, organized sections of the store. This makes it easy for customers to find the styles and sizes they need, and it also helps retailers keep track of their inventory. Additionally, socks and gloves are small and lightweight, which makes them easy to store, transport, and set up for display.

Socks and gloves also give the retailer opportunity for a high rate of repeat business. Even with moderate use, socks and gloves eventually wear

a lower-priced item, they can also be used as premiums or “spiffs” to add on when a customer buys a premium pair of boots and another pair of socks, or something like a pair of gloves with every rifle.

In addition to being essential items

further increase their profit margins.

Socks and gloves also provide an opportunity for retailers to offer a larger variety of branded merchandise. Some retailers, even smaller ones, have their own brands of socks and gloves, which helps to build

and decent looks for a long time.

Cotton, however, does not belong inside a hunting or hiking boot.

There is a reason why the old timers used to say, “cotton kills.” Many of the deaths attributed to the famous 1940 Armistice Day storm were the



Photo: Bill Conway



out. Balancing high quality with fair pricing, you'll get premium profits and, while customers may only need to purchase a firearm once every few years, they will likely need to purchase new socks and gloves on a more frequent basis. This means that you have yet another opportunity to build your customer base by offering high-quality socks and gloves that customers will return to purchase time and time again. Because they are

for outdoor activities, socks and gloves offer a high margin for retailers. While the retail price of a pair of socks or gloves may be relatively low, the cost of goods sold is even lower. This means that you can make a healthy profit on each pair of socks or gloves you sell — especially in the premium lines. Additionally, retailers can offer promotions and sales on socks and gloves to entice customers to purchase more items, which can

brand loyalty among their customers. It is certainly an option worth exploring. By offering high-quality, branded merchandise, these retailers can differentiate themselves from their competitors and offer their customers a unique product.

There are many options when it comes to these items. Following some of the following recommendations can help you shorten the learning curve and get you up and running and making money faster.

SOCKS

We all know the daily wear socks — most people wear socks made of 100% cotton. Cotton, however, belongs on the shelves of a discount box store, and inside of a child's tennis shoe going back and forth to school. They are inexpensive, easily replaceable, and with a cup of bleach in the wash, they maintain their wearability

result of not having the right gear for the conditions. The weather had been warm; it was still November in the upper Midwest. Many people headed out into the duck marsh that day wearing their cotton clothes and light jackets. Some wore shoes instead of boots. When the storm came in, more than 50 of them died.

When it comes to socks and gloves, synthetic, will, or blends of the two are the order of the day.

Synthetics/Bamboo and Synthetic Blends: The main advantage to synthetic socks is their cost. They tend to require less labor in the manufacturing process, and there is an almost infinite supply of material to use for production. The invention of polar fleece in the 1980s was a giant leap forward in technology and comfort when it came to synthetic materials used in outdoor products. Insulators like DuPont's hollowfill



were put into hats, coats, gloves and sleeping bags — and, yes, they were even made into socks.

These types of high-loft materials, combined with their inability to soak up moisture, and, instead, transport it away from the body, made it a

the body, similar to synthetic fibers. It also needs no processing to be soft, unlike some wools on the market. Wool socks have anti-microbial properties, but can have a distinct wool smell when wet.

Some quality brand names to



great material for everything from insulated outerwear to long underwear and footwear.

Bamboo fibers also make excellent socks that transport moisture well and have inherent anti-microbial properties. They are included with synthetics because of their similar properties.

Wool: Wool is one of nature's wonder materials. Several different animals insulate themselves with wool, with sheep being the most well-known. Alpacas also grow their own type of wool. Both of them are excellent insulators and have their own advantages. Unlike cotton, wool insulates even when wet. There have also been several studies that show that wet merino wool generates its own heat through the movement of water into the fibers when the animal (or you, in the case of apparel or accessory's) moves. Alpaca wool, on the other hand, doesn't absorb but, rather, transports water away from

explore are Darn Tough, Kennetrek (who also sells great boots!) Smartwool, Ducksworth, Browning, Fox River and Farm to Feet for merino. Warrior, Montana Alpaca, and Pacas are some great sources for Alpaca wool items, including socks and gloves.

GLOVES

While there are varied materials that make up a sock, the overall variants of them are less than gloves. (for example, you don't see many "toeless" socks).

Like socks, having a seasonal assortment of gloves will allow you to sell more to more people. Not everyone likes bitter cold, but everyone can still use a nice pair of lightweight gloves for chilly mornings.

Also like socks, cotton has a limited use in gloves — usually for things like light gardening or yard work.

Some recommendations of gloves you should explore to carry in your store:

Leather gloves. For working in the barn, moving lumber, and shooting in cool weather, a pair of lightweight cowhide or deerskin gloves are hard to beat.

Fingerless gloves. These are somewhat specialized, but many shooters (especially handgun shooters) and outdoorsmen and women use them.

Phone-compatible gloves. Having a few types of these in stock will take advantage of the huge amount of smartphones in the marketplace. Many companies offer their product with fingertips that conduct touch to your phone.

Basic insulated gloves. These are for cold weather, going to and from your car, and short use.

Heavy-duty "outdoor" gloves. These are the Cadillac of gloves, made from heavy-duty nylon with

breathable membranes such as Gore-Tex or Sympatex. They are also available in a range of prices, with some running into the several-hundred-dollar range. With a properly trained staff who knows how to sell them, these types of glove can add significantly to your bottom line.

Not only are socks and gloves essential items for outdoor activities, but they also offer a high return on investment, are easy to merchandise, have a high rate of repeat business, offer a high margin for retailers, provide an opportunity for branded merchandise, and help you build relationships with your customers. By stocking up on a variety of styles and sizes of socks and gloves, retailers can provide their customers with the essential items they need to enjoy the great outdoors. **HR**

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Giving a Gun as a Gift

Guide your customers down the right — and legal — path if they insist on purchasing a firearm as a gift for a loved one this holiday season.



COURTESY OF THE NSSF

With gift-buying season upon us, it's natural for gun owners who enjoy target shooting, hunting, collecting or just plain plinking to want to share their enjoyment of firearms with others. What better way to do that than to gift a firearm to a family member, close friend or relative? You're going to have customers coming into your shop all season long looking to buy a firearm for a spouse or other loved one. Make sure you're giving them accurate advice on the best way to do this legally.

The first thing to remember when thinking about giving someone a gun is that ownership of a firearm brings with it some serious responsibilities and legal obligations that other consumer products don't.

CONSIDER A GIFT CARD

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) recommends that if you want to give someone a new firearm, rather than going to a gun store, buying it on your own and giving it to, say, your father, consider instead purchasing a gift certificate from that retailer and giving it to Dad as his present. That way he'll get the exact gun he wants, and there's no question about who is "the actual buyer of the firearm," which of course is a question

any purchaser must certify on the Federal Form 4473 at the time of purchase. When customers come to your store looking to buy a gun as a gift, see if you can talk them into using a gift certificate instead.

BUYING A GUN AS A GIFT

Let's assume, however, a customer does not want to give a gift card because they want to give the gun itself or give "Old Betsy," their favorite old deer rifle, to their son or daughter and they want to see the joy on their face when they unwrap their present. The first question you then must ask is whether the intended recipient can legally own a firearm at all. Remember, you can never under any circumstances transfer a firearm to someone you know — or have reasonable cause to believe — legally can't own one. That's a federal felony, so be careful. Pre-January 1, 1899, antique firearms are generally exempt, but advise your shopper to be safe and check with local law enforcement before they hand over their prized possession.

The next question is whether the person can own the gifted firearm where he or she lives. With more than 20,000 different gun laws on the books, even the kinds of firearms that law-abiding citizens can own vary from place to place; for



example, juveniles (under age 18), generally speaking, are precluded by law from possessing a handgun, and some states restrict certain types of firearms and magazine sizes. As a retailer, you already know the laws in your area, but check out the ATF website for an overview of local laws or contact your state's attorney general's office if you need a refresher, and refer buyers there if they have questions.

It is legal to purchase a firearm from a licensed firearm retailer that you intend to give as a gift. There's no law that prohibits a gift of a firearm to a relative or friend who lives in your home state. However, whether a customer purchases a new firearm or wants to gift a gun they already own, keep in mind that some states (California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, New York, Oregon, Rhode



Island, Washington State) and the District of Columbia require them to transfer a firearm through a local licensed firearm retailer so an instant background check will be performed to make sure the recipient is not legally prohibited from owning the gun. Maryland and Pennsylvania require a background check for a

private-party transfer of a handgun. There are exceptions, and laws change, so it's important to know the law of your state.

If the person they want to give the gift of a firearm to does not reside in the same state as the giver, then under federal law, they have to ship the firearm to a licensed firearm retailer

in the state where the recipient lives who can transfer the firearm after a background check.

GIVING A GUN AS A GIFT

There are a lot of things to consider when making a gift of firearm to ensure it is done properly. Gift certificates might be the best solution in order to avoid legal pitfalls and state law variations.

It's often an emotional moment when a treasured family heirloom is passed down to the next generation. These moments are part of what our cherished enjoyment of firearms is all about and represent that unique bond that sportsmen and sportswomen have with their fellow enthusiasts.

So, help your customers enjoy the holidays and do gift-giving right. **HR**

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HUNTING RETAILER GEAR ROUNDUP

Lever-Action Guns

Lever-action rifles (and shotguns) might have won the West, but they've also won the hearts and souls of many devout modern-day hunters.

Many young, impressionable kids back in the 1960s developed a deep regard for the celluloid heroes of the day — with TV cowboys such as Paladin, Matt Dillon, the Lone Ranger, the Cartwrights and others deeply influencing their formative years. They would spend hours each week, eyes glued to the family Zenith console, watching stories of the Old West — and the timeless struggle between good and evil — unfold in black and

white and then, finally, in living color, dreaming that one day they would be a rifle guy or girl.

And those iconic lever-action rifles that won the Old West were also commonplace in most of the deep-woods hunting camps in those days, and for good reason. For hunters who wanted a dependable, quick-handling, lightweight firearm with considerable knockdown power at moderate ranges, they're hard to beat. This core group acknowledges two

things: that most big-game animals taken in this country are killed with in lever-action cartridge ranges, and that hunting is about the challenge of spot-and-stalk rather than just spot-and-shoot. Others hunt with lever guns for nostalgic reasons.

While bolt-action and, more recently, AR-platform rifles now dominate the hunting landscape, lever guns still have their place and have even gained back some of the popularity they enjoyed back in the day,

and for three good reasons: nostalgia, efficiency and better ammo offerings. Add the fact that this platform lends itself well to protecting life and liberty and you have a firearm that can serve double duty.

So, for your customers with a nostalgic bent — or those who see the value in a lever gun for hunting and home protection — here are eight lever guns that are sure to trip their trigger.



BIG HORN ARMORY MODEL 89 BLACK THUNDER

Chambered in .500 S&W Magnum, Big Horn Armory's Model 89 Black Thunder (\$2,899) is a great choice for hunting, home defense or survival situations. Its robust design includes stainless-steel construction, heat-treated and coated with a black nitride finish, making it nearly impervious to corrosion. A black laminate stock adds strength and additional weather resistance, as well as no-nonsense aesthetics. The Model 89BT comes

from the factory with a Skinner rear aperture adjustable sight and factory-installed scout scope mount rail. The Model 89BT features a short 16.25-inch barrel and M-Lok rail on the front of the forend to mount lights, laser sights or other accessories. It also includes an energy-absorbing 1-inch Pachmayr Decelerator butt pad, tank-style muzzle brake and fiber-optic front sight. www.bighornarmory.com



BROWNING BLR LIGHTWEIGHT '81 STAINLESS TAKEDOWN

The Browning BLR Lightweight '81 Stainless Takedown (\$1,229.99-\$1,499.99) is an accurate, fast-handling lever-action rifle that sports a satin finish on a laminated gray hardwood stock. A satin-nickel finish on the receiver and matte finish on the stainless barrel minimize game-spooking reflection, and its Truglo/Marbles fiber-optic front sight aids positive target acquisition in low-light conditions. This takedown model is unique,

allowing the user to simply flip a finger lever and instantly separate the rifle into two parts for space-saving storage or easy transportation. The BLR Takedown is factory drilled and tapped for an optional forward-mounted, scout-style scope base to provide a rock-solid optics mounting platform, allowing the user to remove the barrel for transportation and storage without losing the scope's zero. www.browning.com





HENRY LONG RANGER EXPRESS

Carrying on with Henry Repeating Arms' popular Long Ranger series, the Long Ranger Express (\$1,285), chambered for .223 Rem/5.56mm, is a utilitarian, multi-purpose and exceedingly capable rifle. It weighs in at 7 pounds and sports a threaded 16.5-inch round blued-steel barrel, water-resistant birch laminate stock, internal transfer bar safety, black solid rubber recoil pad, integral fore and aft sling swivels and a five-round detach-

able steel-box magazine. Atop the black-anodized aerospace-grade aluminum receiver sits a factory-mounted Picatinny rail, ready to accept a red-dot sight, versatile low-power variable optic or precise fixed-magnification scope. From hunting foxes to wild hogs, this rifle is ready to go to work. www.henryusa.com



LEGACY SPORTS INTERNATIONAL CITADEL LEVTAC

Citadel LevTac .45 Colt and .410-bore lever-action rifles from Legacy Sports (starting at \$699/.410-bore; \$899/.45 Colt) are equipped with a modular forend M-Lok design for easy accessory attachments while providing a firm grip and a tough black synthetic stock. Topped with a Picatinny rail, rear peep sight and front blade sight, the LevTac

features an 18-inch threaded barrel in the .45 Colt version and 20-inch barrel in the .410-bore offering, with a large lever-action loop for easy access. The rifle is sure to be a hit with hunters while doing double duty for home defense or as a camp/truck gun. www.legacysports.com



MARLIN 1895 SBL

The Marlin 1895 SBL lever-action rifle, chambered in .45-70 Govt. (\$1,479) offers smooth lever-action cycling, adjustable Ghost Ring rear and high visibility tritium fiber optic-front sights, and a host of other features that make it a great choice for short- to medium-range shooting. With a cold hammer-forged stainless-steel 19.1-inch threaded barrel and overall length of 37.25 inches, this lever-action powerhouse is both compact

and lightweight — weighing in at only 7.3 pounds. The iconic hammer block safety lever prevents accidental discharge while loading/unloading the six-round tubular magazine, while a gray laminate stock and forearm with cut checkering provide exceptional handling and comfort in rugged conditions. An updated Picatinny rail provides a stable mounting surface for a variety of modern optics. www.marlinfirearms.com



TAYLOR'S TC73 TUNED RIFLE

Chambered in .357 Mag., the Taylor's TC73 Tuned Rifle (\$1,904.89) is designed on the traditional 1873 lever-action platform for exceptional accuracy at medium range. It has a 20-inch barrel and 10-round capacity and features a walnut stock and forend, forged steel frame with case coloring and a smooth hammer/trigger pull. It includes a cus-

tom action with hand polishing, custom hammer and lever springs, custom magazine tube spring and an overall lightened action. The TC73 Tuned Rifle has a buckhorn rear and blade front sights and steel butt plate. It has an overall length of 39.25 inches and weighs 7.9 pounds. www.taylorsfirearms.com





WINCHESTER MODEL 94 CARBINE

The Winchester Model 94 Carbine, chambered in .30-30 Win. (\$1,309.99), is a compact lever-action rifle that, because of its size and quick handling, is a great choice for hunting in heavy cover for deer, bears, wild hogs and other fast-moving game. With today's superior ammunition designed specifically for lever actions, the Model 94 is as relevant as any bolt action for many hunting situations. Features include a satin walnut stock with

authentic straight-grip styling, classic carbine-style forearm and blued steel carbine strap butt plate. The Model 94 Carbine is drilled and tapped for optional scope mounts and has a triple-checked button rifled barrel, bolt relief cut and a Marble Arms front sight and adjustable semi-buckhorn rear sight. www.winchesterguns.com



ZANDERS TRISTAR LR94 LEVER SHOTGUN

The Zanders TriStar LR94 .410-bore lever-action top-eject shotgun (\$1,070) is chambered for 2 1/2-inch shotshells and has a capacity of five-plus-one rounds. It features a 22-inch barrel, top firing pin block safety, front blade fixed and rear adjustable sights, nickel-plated receiver and walnut stock and forend. It comes with one Beretta/Benelli

Mobil-style modified choke and black rubber recoil pad, has an overall length of 40.75 inches and weighs 6.28 pounds. The LR94's compact size makes it a good truck gun as well as a good choice for hunting and home defense. www.gzanders.com

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BY GORDY KRAHN

HUNTING RETAILER NEW PRODUCTS



AMERICAN BUFFALO PECOS TUMBLE WEED KNIFE
American Buffalo Knife and Tool Company is expanding its line of Roper Knives with the new Pecos Tumble Weed offering. This vintage sodbuster-style knife sports a 3-inch 1065 carbon steel blade with brass liners. Measuring 3.5 inches when closed, it features a simple lock back design. The Pecos Tumble Weed is finished with a Roper Knives logo on the cream yellow delrin handle. Based out of Minden, Louisiana, American Buffalo Knife and Tool Company offers a full line of cutlery and multi-tool products, each the result of an extensive effort to develop high-quality tools at a great value to customers. MSRP: \$25.99 www.abkt.com



BARNETT RECRUIT XP CROSSBOW

The Recruit XP from Barnett represents an exceptional value in a crossbow that is incredibly easy to use while delivering deadly downrange performance. Launching arrows at a blazing 330 fps, it has plenty of punch for anchoring big game. With a draw weight of only 125 pounds, this bow is extremely easy to draw and a good fit for youngsters, with an adjustable butt stock customized to fit any size hunter. Its Anti-Dry Fire trigger system, Soft-Lok floating bristle arrow retainer and pass-through grip automatically keep less experienced shooters safer, especially during the excitement of the hunt. The Recruit XP includes essential getting-started accessories such as two 20-inch Headhunter arrows, an illuminated three-dot sight, lightweight side-mount quiver and lubrication wax. MSRP: \$299 www.barnettcrossbows.com



HOWA CARBON ELEVATE BOLT-ACTION RIFLE

Discover the best of both worlds with Howa's Carbon Elevate Bolt-Action Rifle from Legacy Sports, the combination of a Stocky's carbon fiber stock paired with a Howa

DSG OUTERWEAR NOVA RAIN SUIT

Designed with premium materials and functional features specifically for outdoor women, DSG Outerwear has been redefining the way for hunting, fishing and cold weather gear for nearly 15 years. Debuting this fall is its Nova Rain Suit, which will provide protection from even the most challenging climates, keeping the user dry, warm and comfortable whenever the weather turns nasty. The breathable Nova Rain Suit (jacket and pants) is equipped with ventilation zippers and taped seams, meeting up to 24 hours of waterproofing standards. Light and packable with stretchable fabric, this rain suit is ideal for any outdoor adventure. DSG Women's Outerwear is designed by women to fit women of all shapes and sizes and built to perform. MSRP: \$230/Each www.dsgouterwear.com



PARD TD32 MULTISPECTRAL RIFLESCOPE

The TD32 Multispectral Rifle Scope is the latest technological innovation from PARD — Dual Spectra Imaging technology that combines long-distance thermal detection, high-definition night vision and a laser rangefinder into a single unit. Featuring a 384x288 resolution IR thermal sensor, 35mm objective lens, 3X optical magnification, 2X digital magnification, 12µm pixel pitch and ≤25mK Noise Equivalent Temperature Difference (NETD), users will enjoy rich contrast and bold resolution when acquiring (and accurately ranging) targets with the 1,200-yard integrated laser rangefinder that seamlessly feeds the data into the on-board ballistics calculator. The IPS LCD thermal imaging and night vision can be displayed on the 800x800 IPS LCD screen simultaneously with the picture-in-picture (PIP) function, providing a clear heat signature and night-vision depth perception. MSRP: \$4,099 www.pard.com



FEDERAL AMMUNITION GOLD MEDAL CENTERSTRIKE 6.5 CREEDMOOR MATCH LOADS

Federal Ammunition's new product line of match-grade centerfire rifle ammunition — Federal Premium Gold Medal CenterStrike — features a proprietary open tip match design, sleek profile and extremely tight specifications for long-range accuracy and consistency and is now available in a 140-grain 6.5 Creedmoor offering. Held to Federal's tightest specs for accuracy, pressure and velocity, its features include a precision-built OTM bullet design, high ballistic coefficient, Gold Medal primers and brass and specially formulated propellant. Gold Medal CenterStrike is also available in .308 Win. and .223 Rem. MSRP: \$36.99-\$47.99/20-round box www.federalpremium.com

carbon wrapped 24-inch threaded barrel that is suppressor or muzzle brake ready — now chambered in 6.5 PRC. Weighing only 6 pounds, 8 ounces, it is lightweight, tough and a true value — while delivering renowned Howa sub-MOA accuracy. The Elevate is equipped with a Limbsaver butt pad and the Accublock lug bed provides the ultimate fit. It is equipped with a three-position safety and two-stage match trigger and is available in a standard carbon fiber or Kryptek Altitude camo finish. It comes with a lifetime warranty. MSRP: \$1,349 www.legacysports.com





RETAY ARMS GORDION COMPACT SHOTGUN

Retay Arms' Gordion Compact Semi-Auto Shotgun was designed to fit any shooter, regardless of size or age. Its full-size 20-gauge frame and shortened stock allow the user to customize the fit with any or all of the four .25-inch shims to adjust the length of pull from 12.5 to 13.5 inches. The Gordion Compact features a premium plastic-free receiver, trigger and trigger guard, and a Dead Straight deep bore barrel using a modern process that does not stress the barrel or affect its integrity, unlike hammer forging. The Gordion Compact also incorporates Retay's Inertia Plus bolt system using a patented rollover internal torsion spring to forcefully rotate the bolt head into the battery, which keeps it from being jarred out. MSRP: \$899-\$999 www.retayusa.com



WILDLIFE RESEARCH CENTER ACTIVE-BRANCH MOCK SCRAPE KIT

Mock scrapes are an effective tool for attracting deer, but sometimes it's hard to find the right tree in a good location at a favorite hunting spot. The Active-Branch Mock Scrape Kit from WRC solves this problem by allowing hunters to create an attractive mock scrape and interaction branch exactly where it's needed. The innovative branch holder allows users to easily mount two branches at the same time — one at the perfect height for the presentation and a second higher branch to mount a Magnum Scrape-Dripper above. The Magnum Scrape-Dripper drips during daytime only to help condition bucks to visit during hunting hours. The kit includes the Branch Holder, Mounting Strap, Magnum Scrape-Dripper and 4 fluid ounces of Golden Scrape Scent. MSRP: \$47.99 www.wildlife.com

BLOCKER OUTDOORS FIELD BRUSH PANTS

Blocker Outdoors Field Brush Pants feature reinforced panels made specifically for hunters who are navigating brushy terrain. The highly comfortable and versatile pants feature nylon overlay panels to defend against burrs and thorns, while increasing overall durability. The base fabric is a smooth, lightweight polyester double-weave material that's noted for its longevity. The water repellent four-way stretch fabric provides comfort and easy, unrestricted movement in the field and protection from moisture. Blocker Outdoors Field Brush Pants were designed for multiple hunting applications — Western big game, pheasants, grouse, doves, quail, as well as pre-season whitetail scouting, stand prep and food plot maintenance. MSRP: \$139.99 www.blockeroutdoors.com



MOULTRIE MOBILE EDGE PRO CELLULAR TRAIL CAMERA

The Edge Pro Cellular Trail Camera from Moultrie Mobile is equipped with all-new False Trigger Elimination capabilities powered by artificial intelligence. Smart Capture technology gives users control over what species the camera captures in photos or videos, extending battery life by reducing unwanted images of non-targeted species. Smart Zones technology allows users to designate custom detection zones and ignore areas with objects that could cause false triggers. Together, these innovative technologies reduce up to 99 percent of false triggers. The Edge Pro also features NYXEL NIR (near infrared) technology, Bluetooth-enabled Live View Aim with the Moultrie Mobile app, 36MP images, 1080P videos and HD sound, lightning-fast trigger speed, built-in memory, flexible power options and nationwide coverage with Auto Connect technology. MSRP: \$179.99 www.moultriemobile.com



GHILLIE MONSTER CAMOUFLAGE SHIRTS AND PANTS

Moisture-wicking Ghillie Monster Camo Shirts and Pants are crafted from a blend of 95 percent polyester fabric and 5 percent spandex, providing an ideal combination of stretch, durability and comfort. The camo pattern is applied using heat transfer printing, which helps to prevent color fading. What sets this camouflage apart is its unique design, meticulously developed to seamlessly blend into diverse environments. It encompasses virtually every color found in nature, similar to the renowned ghillie suits used by snipers.

Ghillie Monster Camo operates by disrupting visual perception and incorporating natural hues and precise depth perception, enabling the wearer to seamlessly merge with any surroundings. MSRP: \$38/Pants; \$25/Long-sleeve shirt; \$20/Short-sleeve shirt www.ghilliemonsteroutdoors.com



LEUPOLD BX-4 RANGE HD RANGEFINDING BINOCULAR

The BX-4 Range HD TBR/W 10x42mm Rangefinding Binocular fuses Leupold's DNA engine and ballistics software with premium optical performance. It is built around the optic maker's Elite Optical System, delivering excellent dawn-to-dusk light transmission, elite-level glare reduction in harsh light and exceptional resolution and clarity. Leupold's True Ballistic Range/Wind (TBR/W) technology features 25 selectable ballistic groups, helping users dial in the exact range of their target. And with TBR/W's 10-mph wind holds, shooters will have all the information they need to experience more first shot hits. The BX-4 Range HD ranges reflective targets at 2,600 yards, trees at 1,600 yards and deer-sized game at 1,100 yards. MSRP: \$1,599.99 www.leupold.com



Corner Crossing Lawsuit Update

Hunters won a major victory in the Corner Crossing case, but nothing is settled yet, and the fight is far from over.

BY BOB ROBB

In the May/June 2023 issue of *Hunting Retailer*, I outlined the landmark Corner Crossing court case in Wyoming and why it is so important to the future of hunting and, more importantly, access to our public lands for all Americans. To briefly summarize, in fall 2021, four nonresident hunters from Missouri erected a small ladder that allowed them to cross through private airspace when stepping from public land to public land over a shared public/private corner in Wyoming without setting foot on the private land itself. They were subsequently accused of trespassing on Iron Bar Ranch land near Elk Mountain; a Carbon County jury later found them innocent of the charges. However, Iron Bar Holdings LLC filed a civil lawsuit claiming the four had violated the ranch's air space — thereby diminishing the 22,042-acre ranch's property value — claiming damages of between \$3.1-\$7.75 million. The ranch was appraised at \$31.31 million in 2017.

In a huge victory for both the defendants and the general public, on May 26, 2023, the District Court of Wyoming found their actions were, in fact, legal, and that crossing through the airspace where they did not touch or otherwise damage private property did not constitute trespassing. David had indeed defeated Goliath. But before we all rush out and start crossing corners throughout the West, take pause. The issue is a complicated one, and the battle is only just beginning. Because unless and until the case is appealed

and heard by higher courts, there is no guarantee that corner crossing in Wyoming — or anywhere else — is explicitly legal.

The issue is contentious enough that in February, the Wyoming legislature passed Senate Bill 56, which “prohibits traveling private lands for hunting purposes.” That bill was supported by, among others, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, the same group that played a large part in the successful role in the defendant's case, both by publicizing it and raising some \$140,000 for their legal defense fund. One of the organization's members also provided pro bono legal services for the defendants.

Even in Wyoming, corner crossing is not expressly legal as this is being written in mid-summer. It appears that decisions regarding whether or not to prosecute hunters for corner crossing have pretty much been left up to the discretion of local sheriff's offices, game wardens, and/or district attorneys. And you can be sure that with powerful rancher interests involved, in areas where those landowners are prominent members of their communities, their influences with local law enforcement and politicians will loom large. An example was the press release issued less than a week after the Wyoming verdict was handed down by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Deputy Director Dustin Temple, in which he said, “Corner crossing remains unlawful in Montana, and Montanans should continue to obtain permission from the adjoining landowners before

crossing corners from one piece of public land to another. Wardens will continue to report corner crossing cases to local county attorneys to exercise their prosecutorial discretion.”

While no appeal has formally been filed as this was written, an appeal by the plaintiff is fully expected. If that appeal is filed, the ruling on it would in essence give it a precedent-setting stature, which could then be used as the basis for expanding that ruling to other states. One of the “issues within the issue” of this case is the standing of federal vs state lands. In some states, so-called “state trust lands” were set aside for specific uses, primarily the raising of revenues for public education; states may argue that they have the right to determine who and how these lands are accessed and used by the general public, both of which may differ from how federal lands may be accessed and used.

When you get lawyers involved, even something seemingly as simple as making it easier, not harder, for the general public to access and enjoy lands we all own together as citizens of the United States should be a no-brainer. For state game departments, whose primary source of revenue is the sale of hunting licenses and big game tags — and out West, in most states the majority of that revenue comes from nonresidents — you would think that they would do everything in their power to make it easier for tag holders to find and access a place to hunt on public land.

This case exposed the dirty little secret I learned when I started traveling

the West as a ham-and-egg public-land deer and elk hunter 50 years ago. In many, many cases, landowners assume that adjacent public lands and their resources — including the game that resides there — are theirs by default. Then when, for example, elk herds migrate down onto the ranch's hayfields, that same rancher demands “landowner tags” which he can then sell or barter as he chooses, essentially turning what is the people's game into the king's game. It's become big business that can only be played by those with enough money to afford increasingly expensive outfitted hunts. Or they receive “depredation tags,” which allow them to kill pre-determined numbers of antlerless elk to “protect their crops” — again without allowing the public to participate.

Nobody is disputing the rights of a landowner to control access to their own property. Private property rights are one of the cornerstones of our society. And if a rancher does not want to allow John Q. Public access to his land to hunt and fish, so be it. But when he wants to prevent reasonable access to adjacent public lands by saying that a person is trespassing by invading his airspace, isn't that a little much? Does that mean that an airplane flying over that same land is also trespassing? Where does it end?

A great place to follow this case as it unfolds is the aforementioned Backcountry Hunters and Anglers website. What do you think about all this? Drop me a note at editor@grand-viewoutdoors.com and let me know. **HR**



Sports South

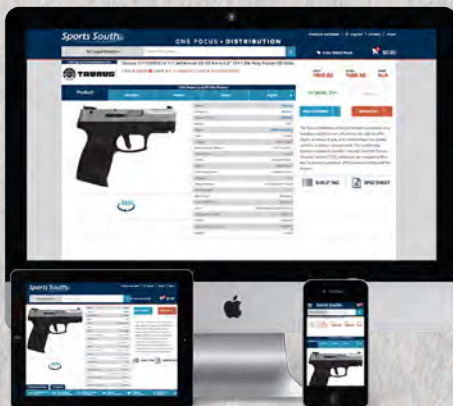
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