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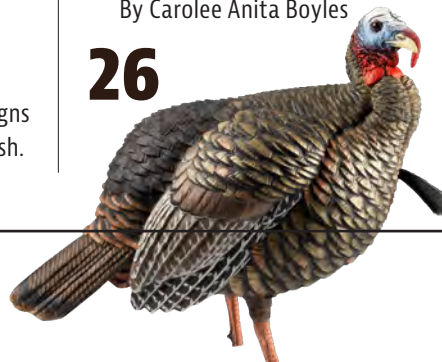
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The Scythe-Ti: Ultra-Lightweight Titanium for .30 Caliber

The Scythe-Ti is SilencerCo's first all-titanium suppressor. Due to its construction, the body of the Scythe-Ti is ultra-lightweight at just 6.3 ounces. It's also compact, causing minimal disruption to host weapons. This makes the Scythe-Ti the perfect .30 caliber hunting suppressor.

The Scythe-Ti also boasts impressive sound suppression while maintaining its lightweight quality – a feature that is unique for suppressors in its class. It's rated all the way up to .300 RUM and has no barrel restrictions. The Scythe-Ti gives shooters and hunters a range of options for calibers and host weapons.

Specifically for hunters, the Scythe-Ti will provide an enhanced hunt and numerous benefits. Using a suppressor allows hunters to maintain situational awareness as they track. When it's time to take the kill shot, the Scythe-Ti delivers exceptional sound suppression for a more comfortable shooting experience. Suppressors also minimize recoil, giving the hunter more accurate follow-up shots if one is needed. The Scythe-Ti also features a new single-port anchor brake to give added recoil reduction while maintaining a minimum length.

Hunters will especially appreciate the Scythe-Ti because of how light it is to pack with them as they trek. It also ships with a special titanium direct thread mount to minimize weight all around. It's a tool that hunters will appreciate when it comes time to take the shot, but one that won't weigh down their pack during the hunt.

Another benefit to the Scythe-Ti being titanium, is that it cools down much quicker than steel. This makes it much easier for shooters and hunters to handle after shooting. Hunters will have a much easier time packing up quickly and heading to the animal for cleaning after a kill shot.

Both hunters who have and have not yet hunted suppressed will love the Scythe-Ti on the end of their .30 caliber rifle. It's the missing piece to their hunting rifle and one that shouldn't be overlooked. The benefits of suppressed shooting are endless, and hunters, in particular, will find themselves having a more enjoyable experience by adding the Scythe-Ti.

The Scythe-Ti is a very well-rounded suppressor, but it also signals the start of SilencerCo's line of premium, titanium suppressors. It was very well-received and succeeded by the Spectre 9, an all-titanium suppressor for 9MM pistols and subguns.

Titanium provides many benefits for shooters and hunters alike, and the Scythe-Ti is just the beginning of SilencerCo's titanium game. For more information or to purchase a Scythe-Ti visit silencerco.com/silencers/scythe-ti/.



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2024 SHOT Show Concludes With Record-Breaking Success

The 46th Shooting, Hunting and Outdoor Trade ShowSM (SHOT Show[®]), owned and operated by NSSF[®] — The Firearm Industry Trade Association — concluded with resounding success, setting new benchmarks for industry innovation, collaboration and engagement. With an expanded show floor, a record-high number of exhibitors, and an array of new features and networking opportunities, the 2024 SHOT Show was the largest to date.

More than 55,400 industry professionals packed the 13.9 miles of aisles over four days at The Venetian Expo and Caesars Forum, eager to view new, innovative products used for target shooting, hunting, outdoor recreation and law enforcement.

“The energy on the SHOT Show floor this year was off the charts,” said Chris Dolnack, NSSF Senior Vice President and Chief Customer Officer. “The feedback we’ve received from our exhibitors and attendees has been amazing, and we can’t thank them all enough for helping us make the show what it is: the greatest trade show in the world.”

This was the largest SHOT Show ever, marking the third year of expanded exhibit space at Caesars Forum, including the new Archery Business Pavilion, in addition to The Venetian Expo. More than 2,600 companies displayed products and services in booths covering more than 821,000 net square feet and attracting attendees from 117 countries and all 50 states.

The 2024 SHOT Show facilitated dialogue and collaboration between government officials and outdoor industry professionals at both the State Attorneys General Forum and 3rd Annual Governors’ Forum. The first-ever Attorneys General Forum was a resounding success. One of the most well-attended special events, the 3rd annual Governors’ Forum was standing-room only, where seven governors discussed the importance of firearm businesses to their economies and their efforts to attract firearm- and ammunition-related companies to relocate to their state. Across America, the \$80.7 billion firearm industry supports more than 393,000 jobs.

Freedom Acquires Stoddard’s

Freedom is announces the acquisition of Stoddard’s Range and Guns, a respected name in the shooting and outdoor sporting industry. This strategic move marks a significant milestone in Freedom’s journey

with the addition of two storefronts to its operations. Stoddard’s operates at two locations – Douglasville, Georgia, and Midtown Atlanta, Georgia.

The integration of Stoddard’s into

the Freedom family signifies the company’s dedication to enhancing value and service in the shooting and outdoor sporting markets. “We are excited about the opportunities this acquisition presents. Together,

we aim to innovate, expand, and elevate the experiences for our customers, combining the best of both organizations,” Freedom said in its press release.

NSSF-Adjusted NICS Background Checks Decline Year-Over-Year

The National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) reported that the January 2024 NSSF-adjusted National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) figure of 1,197,294 decreased 5.6 percent compared to the January 2023 NSSF-adjusted NICS figure of 1,268,236.

For comparison, the unadjusted January 2024 FBI NICS figure of 2,180,262 reflects a 16.6 percent decrease from the unadjusted FBI NICS figure of 2,612,736 in January 2023.

January 2024 marks the 54th month in a row that exceeded one million adjusted background checks in a single month.

The NSSF adjustment is in response to 24 states that have at least one qualified alternative permit, which, under the Brady Act, allows the permit-

holder, who has undergone a background check to obtain the permit, to purchase a firearm from a licensed dealer without a separate additional background check for that transfer. The number of NICS checks in these states does not include these legal transfers based on qualifying permits, and the NSSF does not adjust for these transfers.

The adjusted NICS data were derived by subtracting NICS purpose code permit checks and permit rechecks used by states for CCW permit application checks and checks on active CCW permit databases. NSSF started subtracting permit rechecks in February 2016.

Though not directly correlated to firearms sales, the NSSF-adjusted NICS data provides an additional picture of current market conditions.

SSSF Names Director of Scholastic Clay Target Program

The Scholastic Shooting Sports Foundation (SSSF)* named Wayne Rasmussen the national director of its Scholastic Clay Target Program (SCTP), leading the SSSF’s youth development program. He has over 13 years of experience in youth

shooting sports as a parent, coach and state advisor.

“With Wayne’s experience in running large-scale shooting sports events, leading coach certification trainings and systems management we are excited for him to take the

helm,” said Rick Leach, president and executive director of the SSSF. Rasmussen’s previous involvement ranges from introducing new athletes to the sport all the way to coaching seasoned athletes in Olympic disciplines. Rasmussen’s leader-

ship will propel the Scholastic Clay Target Program and the SSSF as a whole into the 2024 shooting sports season,” continued Leach. **HR**



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How Employee Recognition Programs Can Stop the Worker Exodus

Companies can stop The Big Quit by recognizing employees for good performance

BY KEN WYSOCKY

Nearly 49 million employees left their job in 2021 alone, according to federal statistics. This unprecedented worker exodus has become known as The Great Resignation or The Big Quit.

As this trend continues unabated, consultant and author Bob Nelson, Ph.D., believes there's a remedy available for beleaguered companies: thoughtful and intentional recognition programs that foster a strong sense of pride among employees, both in their work and the companies that employ them.

"Whatever you're trying to get more of from employees, you'll get it if you recognize them for doing it," says Nelson, owner of Nelson Motivation in San Diego, a keynote speaker and author of business books including 1,501 Ways to Reward Employees. "If you want any type of behavior from an employee — or even a spouse, your kids or your neighbors — thank them for the things they do that you want them to do more of. It's a very simple but very powerful concept."

Nelson says his years of research into the power of recognition and employee pride — including a three-year study that involved 47 American companies — revealed why so many



managers don't recognize employees. The most common one was they didn't feel it was important, says Nelson.

Managers also said they didn't have time, believed it wasn't part of their job description or feared offending those employees who weren't getting recognized. Some managers even felt that because they didn't get recognition, they didn't feel the need to recognize employees.

"It looked like a long list of excuses to me," he says. "Ever since then, I've spent my career trying to help managers and organizations see the power of this pride principle and get in the game."

RECOGNITION PAYS OFF

But there are a host of compelling reasons to keep recognition top of mind. Or, as Nelson puts it, "If you see something, say something."

For starters, a dispirited workforce leads to high turnover and low engagement. The cost of replacing an employee is estimated to be about 40% of their income (or up to two times the salary of senior executives). Furthermore, a Gallup poll shows that the cost of involuntary turnover is \$1 trillion for businesses across the U.S.

As if that isn't convincing enough, Gallup says that actively disengaged employees cost businesses in the United States anywhere from \$450 to

\$550 billion annually. Gallup results also show that disengaged employees have 37% higher absenteeism, 49% more work accidents and commit 60% more errors.

On the positive side, consider that a study Nelson conducted in 2021 with Rick Garlick, Ph.D, also a researcher and consultant, determined that when compared to employees with low levels of individual pride in their work, high-pride-level employees are:

- 10 times more likely to be satisfied with their jobs.
- Eight times more likely to recommend their company as a good place to work.



- Eight times more likely to look forward to going to work.
- Seven times more likely to feel they're paid fairly.
- Six times more likely to happily spend the rest of their careers with their present employers.
- Six times more likely to stay at their current job even if offered significantly higher pay to work elsewhere.

Given that consistently high levels of recognition result in strong individual pride, there's clearly a hand-in-glove relationship between the two that's worth cultivating, Nelson says.

EFFECTIVE RECOGNITION MATTERS

Many companies believe they already recognize employees because they hold a company-wide holiday party or give employees token gifts for things such as employment anniversaries or reaching certain work anniversaries. In other cases, managers think it suffices to make time to celebrate employee birthdays by serving cake at a team gathering.

While well-intended, these are ineffective methods for recognition, Nelson asserts, because they're perfunctory and don't truly make employees feel valued.

"What you're actually doing is reinforcing presence, not performance," he explains. "You're merely reinforcing the fact that they show up for work. This ends up creating a culture of entitlement, as in, 'I'm here, so reward me.'"

Performance-based recognition is much more effective, Nelson notes.

"If you want good performance, recognize good performance," he says. "It becomes a self-fulfilling strategy. And people who perform well feel great about themselves. It helps them learn and grow, and the compa-



ny benefits from their progress."

While there's a possibility of overdoing recognition to the point that it becomes meaningless because everybody gets a trophy, that won't happen if the recognition is sincere, specific and strategic.

POWER OF EMPOWERMENT

Empowering employees is a great way to generate pride. As an example, Nelson cites a Connecticut-based company, Boardroom Inc., a book and newsletter publisher. Years ago, the company established an "I Power" program, which encourages all employees to submit two suggestions a week for improving the business.

A volunteer employee — a differ-

ent one every week — evaluates all suggestions the same week they're submitted. If the employee deems an idea worth pursuing, the suggestion is returned to the employee who submitted it, along with permission to implement it.

Company officials credit the program for eventually increasing annual revenue by 500% in a three-year period as well as boosting employees' morale and energy while virtually eliminating turnover, Nelson says.

In one case, a shipping clerk suggested that the company trim the paper size of the books it publishes by 1/16th of an inch, which would qualify them for a lower shipping rate. The result? An annual savings of

\$500,000 a year.

Another company gives out "unsung hero" awards. It finds candidates by calling customers and asking them to identify employees who provide great customer service.

"Just ask your customers who they always ask for when they call your company," Nelson suggests. "Then invite a representative from that company to come in and present the award. This makes the employee a hero — they're on cloud nine."

ONLY THING TO IT IS TO DO IT

Nelson says annual employee surveys that pose strategic questions are a great tool to help companies understand if their employees lack a sense of pride in their work or the company.

Of course, it's also critical to measure the effectiveness of recognition programs. As Nelson points out, the late management guru Peter Drucker once said you can't manage what you can't measure. But for companies plagued by things such as high turnover and low engagement, the most important thing is to ignite a pride movement through strategic recognition.

"If companies won't do it, managers should just work it into their own behavior," he advises. "Don't worry about upper management, worry about what you're doing for your direct reports — strive to catch them doing something right."

"It's shockingly simple," he continues. "There probably are hundreds of studies that make a clear case that the power of recognition is real — that whatever you recognize gets repeated."

"The potential for increasing pride is there for every employee and every company," Nelson concludes. "It's just a matter of tapping into it — you turn it on and it becomes a flood." **HR**



New Turkey Shotguns For 2024

These three models will pique a turkey hunter's interest this spring.



was headed out the cabin door to hunt an early season Oklahoma gobbler I had put to bed the evening before when my buddy stopped me before I could get to my truck and gave me a serious look.

"You're not really going to take that old shotgun you've been shooting for 25 years, are you?" he asked, thrusting a different gun into my hand. "See what you think of this."

Not one to be rude, I didn't correct him about my old shotgun. In fact,

I'd been hunting many species of game birds with that old Remington 870 with a 28-inch barrel for more than 30 years, and had killed my fair share of gobblers with the gun, too.

The new gun was light, shorter than my 870 and a semi-auto. I later found out it was a Benelli Super Black Eagle Turkey model. When the gobbler flew down, he ignored my calls and started strutting and heading in the wrong direction. Fortunately, I had anticipated that might

happen, quickly snuck around a big hill and headed him off, laying him out with a single shot.

While the Benelli didn't kill the big gobbler any deader than my 870 would have, I began to see the benefit of a shorter barrel, fiber-optic front sight, pistol grip, specialized turkey choke and other features the newer model had to offer. That's when I decided that maybe a new turkey gun should be on my wish list.

For your customers looking for a

↑ Pictured is the Mossberg black synthetic Eventide, the base model upon which the Eventide Turkey in this article is based.

new turkey shotgun, 2024 is a great year to make such a purchase. Here are three new guns, just introduced at SHOT Show 2024 in January, that might just entice your customers to pull out their credit cards.





MOSSBERG SILVER RESERVE EVENTIDE TURKEY

While most turkey shotguns are pump-action or semi-auto models, Mossberg has gone another direction in 2024 with the new Silver Reserve over-and-unders. And while some will say two shells aren't enough, I've seldom used more than one shot when turkey hunting. And when I did, a second shot did the job. Fact is, most gobblers won't hang around for a third shot.

The new Mossberg, somewhat ironically imported from Turkey, is available in a 3 1/2-inch-chambered 12-gauge, along with 20- and 28-gauge models with 3-inch chambers. The 12-gauge version features 20-inch barrels topped with a front fiber-optic sight. The synthetic stock, forend and metal surfaces wear full camo coverage.

Offering less recoil and lighter weight than their big brother, the 20- and 28-gauge

over/unders feature 3-inch chambers, 20-inch barrels with extended choke tubes, a front fiber-optic sight and a full camo package. Shell extractors and a tang-mounted safety and barrel selector are standard on all gauges.

All models feature chrome-lined bores and chambers for corrosion resistance. Mossy Oak camouflage offers superior patterns that blend in naturally with the terrain, and the Greenleaf pattern used on the Silver Reserve Turkey shotguns offers silhouette concealment with its blend of dirt, bark, moss and oak sapling elements. The three chokes that come with the gun include two XX-Full and one improved cylinder, with the I/C giving hunters a good option in case that first shot is much closer than expected. All three models in the Silver Reserve Turkey line have an MSRP of \$927.



WINCHESTER SX4 LONG BEARD

Touted by Winchester as the "ultimate turkey-hunting shotgun," the SX4 Long Beard's name conjures up images of a big gobbler strutting to within shooting range. The SX4 is the successor to the SX3, and it is built on the bulletproof Active Valve System, which was the core foundation of that popular model.

Winchester's newest turkey gun features a synthetic pistol grip stock with improved ergonomics and textured gripping surfaces. To ensure perfect fit, the gun ships with spacers to adjust the length of pull and three interchangeable comb height inserts. The 24-inch barrel is easy to swing in tight quarters, and the gun comes with Invector-plus extra-full turkey extended choke tubes.

Chambered for up to 3 1/2-inch 12-gauge ammo, the SX4 features back-bored technology that reduces friction between the shot cup and the bore for increased shot pellet velocity and minimized pellet deformity for more uniform patterns, and the hard chrome-plated chamber and bore reduce wear and protect the internals from

the elements. A 20-gauge model has a 3-inch chamber and the same features.

The SX4 Long Beard also features a self-adjusting active valve gas system and Quadra-vent ports that vent excess gasses for cleaner operation and less required cleaning. A drop-out trigger group also makes for easier cleanup after that big gobbler is in the bag.

The gun features a Truglo fiber-optic front sight with an adjustable rear sight. For those who prefer a red-dot sight or other optic, a Weaver-style cantilever rail makes mounting an optic a simple task. Additionally, a reversible crossbolt safety makes the gun easier to set up for right- or left-handers, and the enlarged bolt handle and bolt release button make manipulations with gloved hands easier.

For concealment, the gun wears a Mossy Oak Obsession camouflage finish. MSRP for the SX4 Long Beard is \$1,219.99.





STOEGER M3500 PREDATOR/TURKEY

Waterfowl hunters have been enjoying the benefits of Stoeger's M3500 semi-auto shotguns for years. New for 2024, the M3500 Predator/Turkey does double duty as a turkey and predator shotgun, making it attractive to more hunters than just a turkey-specific model. This gun brings Stoeger lovers the hard-hitting, no-fail performance of Stoeger's M3500 semi-auto series in an all-new model tailored for those in pursuit of turkeys or predators.

Chambered in 3 1/2-inch 12-gauge, the new gun is powered by Stoeger's inertia-driven system to ensure reliable cycling of even the heaviest magnum turkey and buckshot loads. The gun features Stoeger's SteadyGrip stock system with a vertical pistol grip that provides optimal hand placement, making for a firm hold on the shotgun even in the odd shooting positions some gobblers seem to be experts at facilitating. The Mossy Oak Overwatch camo covering nearly the entire gun helps in fooling even the wariest tom or coyote.

The sighting system for the 24-inch barrel features a full-length vent rib with a red fiber-optic front sight designed to be easy to pick up even in low light. For those who prefer an optic, the receiver comes drilled and tapped for mounting a red-dot sight or turkey scope. Extended Mojo choke tubes come with the gun in Mojo Predator and Mojo Turkey restrictions to hold patterns longer and produce consistent points of impact.

In addition, a ported barrel helps mitigate the recoil of heavy, hard-hitting turkey loads, and a plush recoil pad aids in that endeavor. This shotgun even comes with a strong, silent paracord sling attached to the integrated sling swivel studs, making the chore of toting it through the woods a little more convenient without hunters having to rob the sling off of another of their guns. With 4+1 ammo capacity, the MSRP for the M3500 Predator/Turkey is \$929 **HR**

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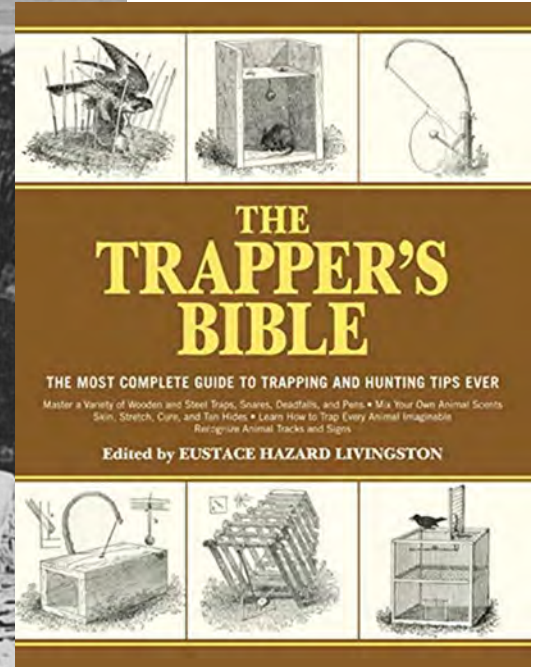
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8 Trapping Products to Catch More Sales

Traditional trapping is alive and well, and trappers need gear to further their pursuit of fur.

BY KEVIN REESE

Whether you believe in evolution or not, the history of trapping is the history of humankind. While scientists assert trapping outdates modern humans, it is at least as old. The fact is inarguable considering we are, indeed, omnivores and wearing skins was necessary for survival even before we were knapping spearheads. Across continents, researchers have unearthed significant trapping evidence, including mass pitfalls where the bones of ancient prey have been recovered. Today, off-grid trappers continue to catch prey for survival, and many more enthusiasts partake of this heritage-driven pastime to stay connected to their ancestry.

Trapping is still tightly woven into our outdoor heritage. Adventure seekers, weekend recreators and diehard survivalists continue to set traps and check traplines on quests to connect consumable and/or spiritual prehistoric dots. Of course, while they venture out to do so, they need the right gear. Those are dots to the past you get to connect while adding sales to your bottom line. In the same spirit of trapping, where outdoor living intersects with industry, here are eight great trapping products to help you catch more sales.

THE TRAPPER'S BIBLE

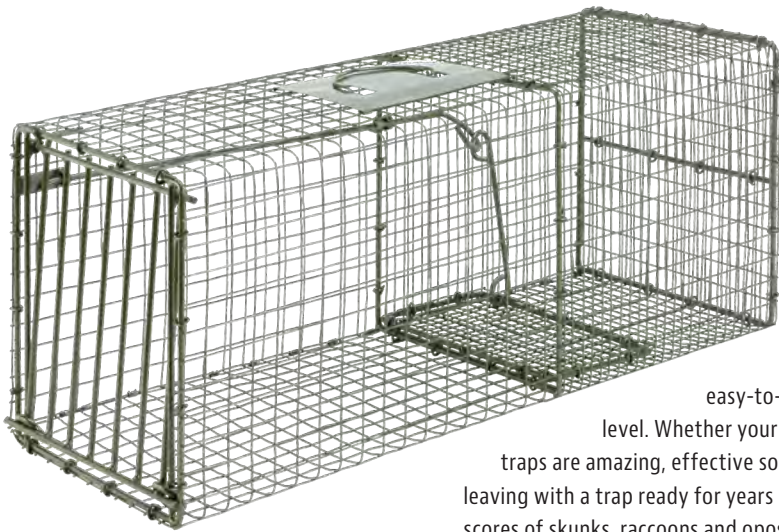
Published in 2012 by Skyhorse Publishing and woven together by renowned Northeastern U.S. trapper and editor Eustace Hazard Livingston, the Trapper's Bible is largely regarded as the most comprehensive guide to trapping ever published. Comprising countless trapping and hunting tips and tactics from the minds of some of the nation's most accomplished trappers, the book is a fundamentally important resource for commercial and recreational trappers at every experience level. The Trapper's Bible includes lessons in identifying tracks, signs and other activity-based evidence, as well as easy-to-understand tips on the set-up and use of a wide array of today's trap systems. Every trapper crossing your retail threshold is better served on the trap line by owning a copy of the Trapper's Bible. www.skyhorsepublishing.com



Wildlife Research Center Hard Core Raccoon Lure No. 1

Founded in 1983 by John and Brian Burgeson and headquartered in Ramsey, Minnesota, Wildlife Research Center (WRC) has produced industry-leading trapping and hunting attractants for more than 40 years. What began as early childhood trapping of mice for 10 cents each landed the Burgeson brothers a dream-life career as business owners in the hunting and shooting industry. While John passed in 2018, Brian and John's son, Sam, remain hard at work providing trapping and hunting scents to diehard hunters from coast to coast. While WRC's foundational products include Trail's End No. 307 and scent dispersal systems, the inspiration for WRC was premised in trapping, and the art of the catch remains a central focal point today. Case in point, Hard Core Raccoon Lure No. 1.

Proven reliable for more than 40 years among discriminating commercial and recreational trappers, government agencies, and animal control specialists, WRC's Hard Core Raccoon Lure No. 1 is representative of decades of decades of successful trapping experience by the Burgeson brothers and results-driven field testing throughout the United States. According to WRC, Hard Core Raccoon Lure No. 1 produces an "intense and complex burning sweet smell that really reaches out and brings them in." The formulation also is designed to last longer in rainy conditions. www.wildlife.com



Duke HD Cage Trap

Founded as a pecan and fur skin merchant in 1938, Duke Traps began offering its line of trapping systems in 1986 and through nearly 40 years of quality production, performance, reliability and customer service, has become a top go-to brand for diehard trappers nationwide; in fact, the company purports to be the global leader in trapping market-share, servicing over 100 accounts worldwide. In the world of Duke Traps, my personal experience with trapping includes the company's HD Cage Trap and I have put it to good use through 20 years of personal pest trapping — it has never failed me.

Available in a size range of Medium (for squirrels, rabbits and skunks) through XXL (for coyotes, bobcats and small- to mid-size dogs), Duke HD (heavy duty) Cage Traps deliver easy-to-setup, reliable trapping for recreational trappers in most environments at any experience level. Whether your customers are after furbearers or simply trying to catch pests around their homes, cage traps are amazing, effective solutions. With the Duke brand and build quality, your customers also are assured they are leaving with a trap ready for years of abuse. Through many years of my own Duke HD cage-trap use (size: L), I have caught scores of skunks, raccoons and opossums, as well as numerous feral cats. The Large model I use measures 28L x 12W x 12H inches. All Duke HD cage traps boast steel-rod, gravity-drop doors; steel-rod frame, protective cage mesh, steel-rod frame and a powder-coat finish. www.duketrap.com

Duke Small Game Snare

With history dating back millennia, snares remain one of the most popular trapping solutions in today's modern-world pursuits, and Duke Traps sits comfortably among the most trusted. Duke snares are primarily purposed for neck catches and are available in five sizes. The first four sizes are numbered 1 – 4. Purpose driven, Duke's Snare No. 1 is for beaver- and raccoon-size animals, No. 2 and 4 are for coyote and fox sizes, and No. 3 is for varmints like rabbits and squirrels. The fifth and largest size is for wild hogs. Duke Snares are constructed of durable, reliable cable-wire and sized based on model (and game size) from 4 to 8 feet. Each snare includes swives and secure-lock fittings.



Duke Foot Trap

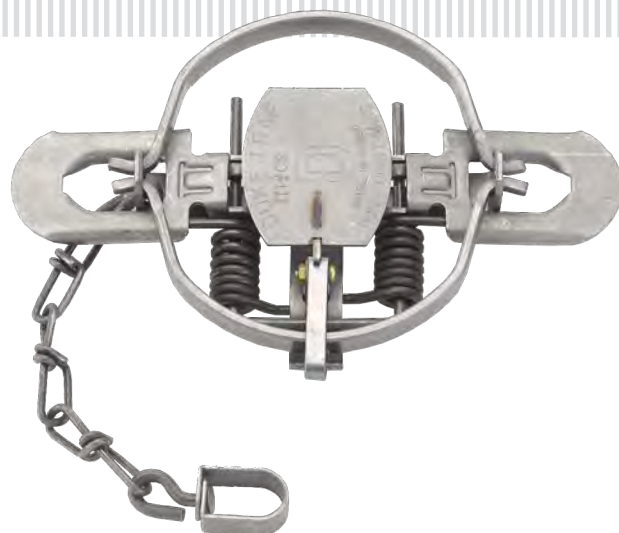
With history dating back to the early 19th century, foot traps remain trapping's most popular small- to mid-size catch system. Similar in look to the bear traps of old, today's foot traps are substantially less destructive. As a side note, bear traps are still legal to use, too; however, they are heavily regulated, and your trapping customers should know their state and local trapping laws.

Traditionally styled Duke Foot Traps feature steel construction and coil springs. Depending on the trap model and size, Duke Foot Traps are designed to capture small- to medium-size wildlife. Perhaps the most popular Duke Foot Trap offering is No. 1.75. In terms of multipurpose, the Duke No. 1.75 Foot Trap is great for coyotes, bobcats, foxes, raccoons, nutria and minks. For new foot-trapping enthusiasts, the No. 1.75 would be a smart choice and for retailers with limited shelf space delivers quite a bit of bang for your inventory bucks.



Bridger T3 Dogproof Raccoon Trap

Whether trying to protect your canines or focus on species-specific trapping, the Bridger T3 Dogproof Raccoon Trap is a perfect, dependable small-game trapping solution. Produced by Minnesota Trapline Company since 2010, the Bridger T3 Trap is designed for raccoons and other varmints like skunks and opossums. Simple to use — bait the bottom, set the trap and stake it down — the T3 is built to withstand years of abuse in rough outdoor elements. T3 Raccoon Trap dimensions are 8L x 1.75W inches. The Bridger T3 Trap includes a theft-stop ring trigger to keep prey active onsite until they are trapped, and a stake chain.



Bridger 159 Bodygripper Trap

Bridger Trap Company was founded by Terry and Jodi Montgomery and later purchased by Minnesota Trapline Company founder Tim Caven in 2009. With more than 40 years of trap production, the Caven family continues to deliver premium Bridger Traps, alongside Minnesota Trapline Company products, catering to demanding trappers nationwide. Bridger continues to occupy one of the top spots in trapping brands, and the Bridger 159 Bodygripper Trap is a solid choice for your retail shelf space.

Perfect for smaller furbearers like fox, raccoon and mink, and designed as a single-spring system, the Bridger 159 Bodygripper Trap features magnum jaws with a spread of 6 1/8 x 6 inches, heat-treated spring, flat safety hood, two heavy duty swivels, 14 inches of No. 2 chain and a total chain length of 17 inches, including the swivels and a one-off tear-drop ring. www.minntrapprod.com



Leggett's Trapper's Bag

Founded in 1984 by Pete and Ron Leggett, Leggett's ranks among the nation's most popular trapping supply producers. While the company's K-9 Exciter lures are trapper favorites, arguably the most popular Leggett's product is the Trapper's Bag. It is also a favorite all-around accessory among many trappers — some suggesting they simply would not use another brand's bag. With 40 years of boots-on-the-ground experience poured into Leggett's products, the brand (and the bag) is trusted.

The Trapper's Bag is available in regular and deluxe models. Both models feature lure or accessory pockets at each end of the open-top style bag while the deluxe model also includes a larger side-panel pocket. Leggett's Trapper's Bags are constructed of 1000 denier nylon and include solid wood floor-inserts as well as nylon carrying straps. Both models of Trapper's Bag boast roomy 21L x 8W x 9H-inch dimensions and are perfect tool-bag solutions for serious trappers. www.trapleggetts.com





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Navigating the Retail Wilderness

In the vast retail landscape, minimum advertised pricing policies come with pros and cons.

BY ACE LUCIANO

Do you feel lost when it comes to pricing your merchandise for sale? A MAP from your manufacturer can be both a help or a hindrance, depending on your perspective and creativity.

Minimum Advertised Pricing (MAP) policies are a common strategy employed by manufacturers that serve as a tool to maintain price discipline and protect brand integrity across various retail channels. These policies stipulate the minimum price at which their products can be advertised, establishing a floor that retailers must adhere to in their promotional materials. By implementing MAP policies, manufacturers aim to prevent aggressive price competition that may lead to a devaluation, or even a perceived devaluation, of their products. This not only preserves the perceived value of the brand but also ensures a level playing field among retailers.





Manufacturers often view MAP policies as essential for nurturing strong relationships with retailers. By setting a minimum advertised price, manufacturers create a stable pricing environment that encourages retailers to invest in marketing and selling their products without the fear of constant price wars. This collaborative approach fosters trust between manufacturers and retailers, as it aligns their interests in maintaining a profitable and sustainable retail ecosystem. Furthermore, MAP policies empower manufacturers to exert a level of control over how their products are presented to the market, allowing them to curate a premium brand image and strategically position their products in the competitive retail landscape. Not all retailers agree with this philosophy, though.

In the rugged terrain of the retail wilderness, store owners grapple with myriad challenges to keep their businesses afloat. One such challenge is determining the pricing strategy that will not only attract customers but also maintain healthy profit margins.

Enter the world of Minimum Advertised Pricing (MAP) policies — a compass, of sorts, for retailers



“By setting a minimum advertised price, manufacturers create a stable pricing environment that encourages retailers to invest in marketing and selling their products without the fear of constant price wars.”

navigating the wilderness of pricing and sales. Let’s explore the pros and cons of MAP policies and how they can be both a lifeline and a limitation for retail store owners.

MINIMUM ADVERTISED PRICING POLICIES: THE PROS

Upholding Brand Image: In the heart of the retail wilderness, brand image is the sacred totem that retailers guard with their lives. MAP policies provide a protective shield for all parties, ensuring that products are not “devalued” through aggressive price slashing. This allows retailers to maintain an aura of exclusivity, positioning themselves as custodians

↑ Pricing is tricky, and MAP policies have pros and cons.

of quality rather than simply peddlers of discounts.

Preserving Profit Margins: Survival in the retail wilderness hinges on the delicate dance of revenue and expenses. MAP policies act to prevent the erosion of profit margins caused by rampant price undercutting. By setting a floor for advertised prices, retailers can ensure that their hard-earned profits remain intact, providing the resources needed to weather storms of lower sales periods and



explore new frontiers like bonuses, add-ons and events.

Just as a balanced ecosystem thrives on diversity, so does the retail landscape.

MAP policies encourage healthy competition by preventing a race to the bottom. When all retailers adhere



↑ MAP policies prevent an unhealthy, profit-destroying race to the bottom — if all retailers stick to the policy.

to a minimum price standard, the playing field is level, allowing businesses to compete based on factors other than price, such as customer service, product knowledge and overall shopping experience.

Strengthening Relationships with Manufacturers: In the wild, survival often depends on alliances. The beaver builds the pond that the trout swim in and the deer drink from. MAP policies create a similar symbiotic relationship between retailers and manufacturers. By respecting the minimum advertised prices set by manufacturers, retailers build trust and strengthen their partnerships with them. This can possibly lead to

preferential treatment, access to exclusive products, and other perks that become valuable assets to the retailer in the competitive jungle of business.

Eliminating Price Wars: Picture a battlefield where retailers engage in relentless price wars, each trying to outdo the other with jaw-dropping discounts. It's a bloodbath that leaves profit margins wounded and customers expectant of perpetual markdowns. MAP policies serve as a peace treaty between retailers, ensuring that the battlefield remains calm, allowing retailers to focus on the quality of their offerings rather than the depth of their discounts.

MINIMUM ADVERTISED PRICING POLICIES: THE CONS

Restriction of Pricing Flexibility: In the wild, adaptability is key to survival. MAP policies, while offering stability, can also shackle retailers with limited pricing flexibility. This restriction becomes evident when retailers find themselves unable to respond swiftly to market fluctuations or employ dynamic pricing strategies. The result may be missed opportunities and lost revenue in the fast-paced retail jungle. Manufacturers, to their credit, often utilize rebates to assist their customers when sales stagnate.

Online Marketplace Challenges: As the retail wilderness expands into the digital realm, navigating the online marketplace becomes a treacherous endeavor. MAP policies may face resistance in this arena, where e-commerce giants often prioritize aggressive pricing to capture market share. Retailers adhering to MAP policies may find themselves at a disadvantage to those who aren't, struggling to compete with online platforms that play by a different set of rules.

Consumer Perception and Expectations: In the eyes of the consumer,



perception is reality.

MAP policies, while preserving brand image, may also lead to the perception that a product is overpriced — especially as the product becomes more dated. This can actually backfire with cost-conscious customers who are accustomed to the thrill of hunting for bargains. Retailers must carefully balance the preservation of brand integrity with meeting the expectations of their

↑ On the other hand, MAP policies don't allow you much pricing flexibility.



target audience.

Enforcement Challenges: Enforcing MAP policies requires vigilance and resources of all parties. In the vast wilderness of retail, policing the pricing strategies of every reseller can be an almost Herculean task. Manufacturers may find themselves engaged in a perpetual game of whack-a-mole, trying to curb price deviations that threaten the stability of their carefully crafted pricing architecture and can take attention away from other areas of their business like marketing, innovation and product development.

THE CROSSROADS OF MAP POLICIES: FINDING THE RIGHT PATH

As we stand at the crossroads of Minimum Advertised Pricing policies, the retail wilderness stretches before us, both promising and perilous. For the savvy retailer, the key lies in a nuanced approach. A rigid adherence to MAP policies may lead to stagnation, while complete disregard may result in a chaotic free-for-all and, in many cases, the loss of the right to sell those products.

Just as a hunter tailors his or her gear to the specific challenges of each hunt, retailers must utilize MAP policies properly to suit the unique terrain of their market. This might involve periodic reviews and adjustments to their overall marketing and sales plan in order to ensure that pricing strategies are responsive to an ever-changing retail landscape.

Embracing Hybrid Strategies: In the wild, survival often depends on adaptation. Think of a snow hare or ptarmigan's changing coats to better match their environment. They never say things like, "But my feathers have always been brown!" because when the snow comes, the ones who don't match their environment are the first

ones to be eaten.

Retailers can explore hybrid pricing strategies that combine the stability of MAP policies with the flexibility to respond to market dynamics. There are many ways to add value to a purchase other than simply lowering prices. This is often seen with many membership organizations offering "Free X" with membership, where "X" can be anything from a pocket knife to a polar fleece to a chance to win a high-ticket item like a gun, off-road vehicle, or hunting trip. Savvy merchants have long harnessed the art of bundling to entice customers. Within the confines of MAP, retailers can create value by offering bundled packages that include additional accessories, complementary products, or exclusive services. This not only adds perceived value



Photo: John Hafner

but also allows retailers to maintain a competitive edge without directly tampering with individual product prices.

Leveraging Technology: In the digital age, technology serves as a powerful guide through the retail wilderness. Retailers can leverage advanced pricing tools and analytics to monitor market trends, track competitor pricing, and make better-informed decisions on almost everything in their business. This not only streamlines the participation in MAP policies but also empowers retailers to navigate the many complexities of the online marketplace.

In the age of social media, the voice of the customer reverberates louder than ever. Encourage satisfied customers to leave reviews and share

↑ Try bundle packages that include accessories or services to offer customers added value while adhering to MAP.

their experiences with you and your business on social platforms. Positive testimonials and user-generated content act as a powerful counterbalance to the allure of lower prices. A stellar reputation can tilt the scales in your favor, drawing customers who may prioritize trustworthiness over rock-bottom prices.

In the retail landscape, the distinction between online and offline is often blurred. Embrace omnichannel retailing to seamlessly integrate the customer experience across various platforms. Allow customers to research online, purchase in-store, or



vice versa. This flexibility not only caters to diverse consumer preferences but also positions your brand as adaptable and customer-centric.

Establish your retail expertise by creating content that educates and engages your audience. Develop blogs, video tutorials, or interactive content that showcases your understanding of the products you sell. By positioning your brand as a trusted authority, you become the go-to destination for customers seeking not just products but insights and guidance. When all else is equal, consumers purchase from who they feel is the most trustworthy.

Master the Art of Upselling:

While MAP policies set a floor for advertised prices, they do not limit your ability to upsell. Train your staff to artfully suggest complementary

mentioned above.

Open Multiple Communication Channels:

In the wild, communication can mean the difference between survival and death. The alert doe stomps her hoof and snorts to get more eyes on something she finds suspicious. Wolves howl to claim their territory and to alert other wolves in the pack to their presence. Retailers should maintain open channels of communication with manufacturers, distributors, and even competitors to foster a cooperative environment where everyone is aligned with the common goal of sustaining a healthy and thriving retail ecosystem. Build alliances within the retail ecosystem. Collaborate with complementary businesses to create mutually beneficial partnerships. Joint promotions, co-branded prod-



Photo: John Hafner

products or upgrades during customer interactions. Whether in-store or online, upselling not only boosts average transaction values but also often provides customers with a more comprehensive solution, enhancing their overall satisfaction. Every gun needs ammo, every bow needs arrows. Boots require socks. You can double the effect of the upsell by utilizing bundle offers like those

ucts, and shared marketing efforts can amplify your reach and appeal, providing a competitive advantage beyond the confines of individual MAP policies.

As the retail jungle echoes with the roars of discounts and selling on PRICE! PRICE! PRICE!, loyalty programs emerge as a stealthy tactic to retain and attract customers. Craft loyalty programs that go beyond



Photo: Bill Conway

↑ Creative communication, including on social media, is necessary to stand out from online retailers.

.....
mere discounts. Consider things like offering exclusive access to private events, early product releases, or any one of a number of other personalized perks. In doing so, retailers can create a community of devoted customers who remain loyal, even when faced with tempting offers from competitors. In the age of analytics, data is the compass that guides retailers through the retail wilderness. Leverage customer data to understand preferences, buying behaviors, and trends. Implement targeted marketing strategies that resonate with your audience, ensuring that every engagement is meaningful and tailored to the individual customer.

Maintain Continuous Adaptation and Learning:

The retail marketplace is in a perpetual state of flux. Successful retailers embrace a mindset of continuous adaptation and learning. By staying attuned to market dynamics, consumer preferences, and industry trends, retailers can adjust and enhance their MAP policies dynamically, ensuring they remain relevant and effective in the face of ever-evolving challenges.

Hopefully, the message is clear: The retail wilderness is a vast and untamed landscape where retailers must navigate the terrain with wisdom and adaptability. MAP policies, like a trusty compass, can guide retailers toward stability and profitability, but only if wielded with finesse and a keen understanding of the ever-changing dynamics of the retail jungle. **HR**





Turkey Gear for Taking Toms

It's prime time for turkey hunters. Are you stocking what they're shopping for?

BY JARROD SPILGER

Once spring arrives, turkeys become the sole focus for many hunters. After all, turkey season is the only hunting season still open in many areas of the country. Catering to spring gobbler chasers makes good sense, because turkey hunting is one of the more gear-intensive outdoor sports, second only to maybe waterfowling. Decoys, calls, blinds, ammo, camo, and various other items are all part of the spring turkey-taking game. The following gear will help hunters tag their toms this season.





DECOYS

AVIAN-X

Avian-X makes some of the most popular and realistic turkey decoys out there. The new HDR (Heavy Duty Realism) line of full-body decoys are molded from hand-carved designs and includes a Feeding Hen, Upright Hen, partial-strut Jake, and full-strut Strutter. The Upright Hen, Jake, and Strutter all come with two interchangeable heads in aggressive and submissive postures. This allows customization of the decoys to fit the mood of local flocks.

My personal favorite Avian-X decoys are found in the LCD (Lifelike Collapsible Decoy) full-body line. They are a bit more affordable than HDR decoys, yet almost as realistic. The LCD lineup includes the Laydown Hen in a sitting posture, Lookout Hen in an upright posture, Breeder Hen in a partially upright posture, and the Feeder Hen in a feeding posture, as well as the Quarter-Strut Jake and Half-Strut Jake. Even though I own several Avian-X decoys, I frequently keep it simple and just use a relaxed Breeder Hen and content Feeder Hen. More often than not, that combo gets the job done. Stakes and carrying bags are included with all Avian-X decoys. www.avian-x.com

FLEXTONE

Flextone also offers highly realistic turkey decoys. Flextone's Thunder Chick hen decoys are available in Upright, Feeder and intermediate Breeder poses. There's also the unassuming Thunder Jake with a short beard and relaxed posture designed to aggravate, not intimidate, mature gobblers. The Thunder Creeper is an undersized strutting decoy whose smaller stature makes it both portable and non-threatening. Every decoy in the Thunder series has an integrated

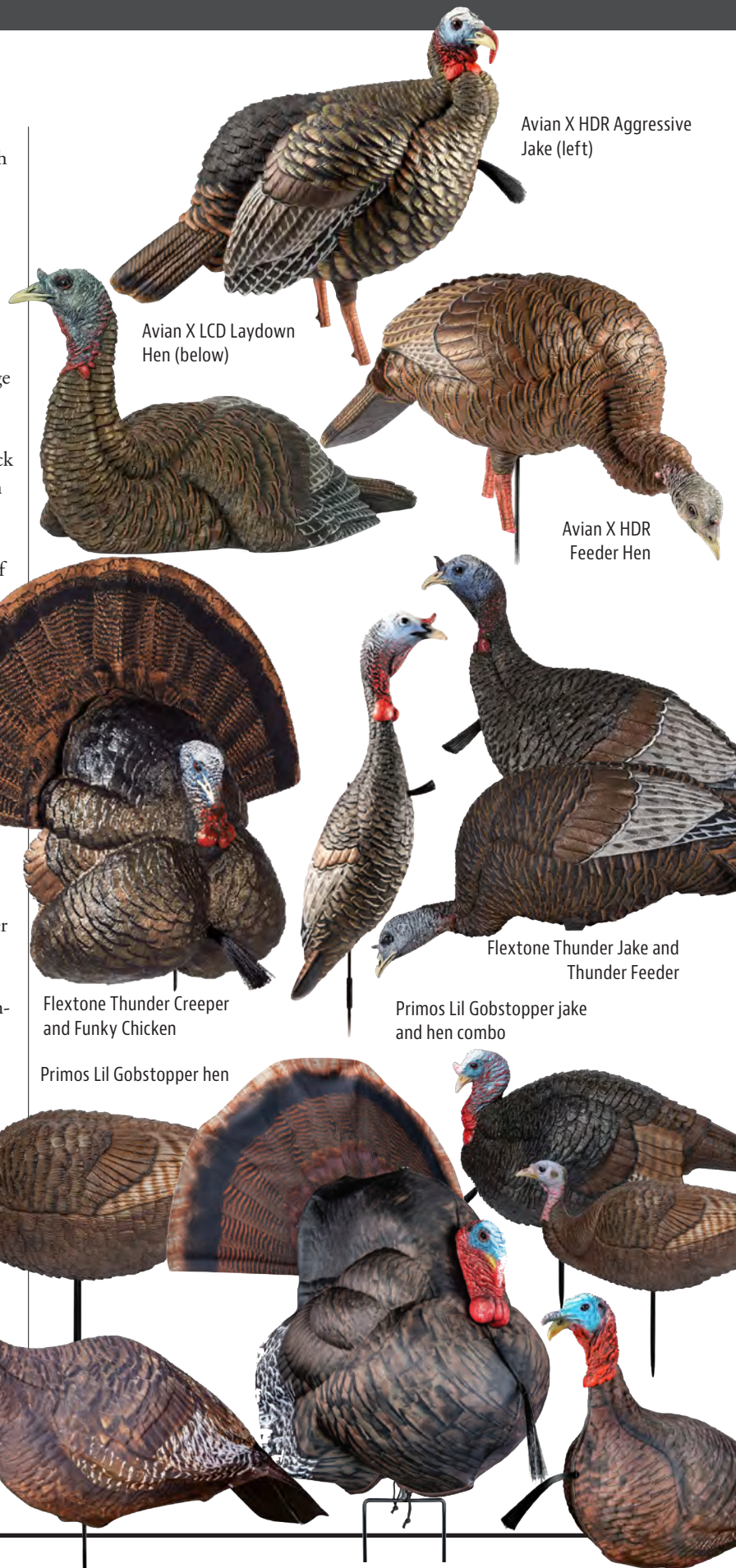
stake that can be folded up into the body, making quiet transport a cinch and lost stakes a thing of the past.

There's also the Funky Chicken, a skinny, wimpy, poor excuse for a turkey that imitates the scrawniest Jake imaginable. Flextone provides some pretty convincing video of the Funky Chicken absolutely enraging big gobblers. I keep one in my garage just in case things get desperate. Otherwise, I like to use a Thunder Jake combined with a Thunder Chick Feeder and Upright, especially when high visibility is a must, since these decoys are a shade darker and stand a bit taller than other decoys. Best of all, Flextone's decoys are much more affordable than many other brands. www.flextone-gamecalls.com

PRIMOS

Primos is a longtime trusted brand in the turkey hunting industry with products that can be found in stores large and small all across the country. Primos turkey decoys included the Lil Gobbstopper Hen and Jake. They feature lifelike poses and coloration, yet are smaller than real turkeys so they won't intimidate wary gobblers. They are sold individually or as a combo.

Primos also offers the Photoform Leading Hen, Strutter and Jake decoys. Photoform decoys use a proprietary process that takes an actual image of a turkey and prints it on the decoy's foam body. The result is ultra-realistic. www.primos.com



Avian X HDR Aggressive Jake (left)

Avian X LCD Laydown Hen (below)

Avian X HDR Feeder Hen

Flextone Thunder Jake and Thunder Feeder

Primos Lil Gobbstopper jake and hen combo

Flextone Thunder Creeper and Funky Chicken

Primos Lil Gobbstopper hen

Primos Photoform hen

Primos Photoform strutter

Primos Photoform jake



CALLS ZINK

Known for its popular waterfowl calls, Zink also makes some highly effective turkey calls, such as the Hick Talker, a raspy, double-sided box call with a walnut body and hickory paddle that features an attractive turkey feather design.

Zink's Thunder Ridge Series of pot calls come with slate, aluminum or crystal calling surfaces. My personal favorite is the crystal version, which has been directly responsible for putting several gobblers in my freezer. Another popular pot call is



the Thunder Ridge Blaster with a bead-blasted aluminum surface for improved control and tone. Zink also offers the Wicked Series of pot and box calls, as well as numerous diaphragm mouth calls. www.zinkcalls.com

PRIMOS

Primos has a huge lineup of turkey calls, but some top sellers include the new double-sided Heartbreaker and compact single-sided Lil Heartbreaker box calls. Both feature a one-piece mahogany box and purple-heart lid.

The new Primos Select series of mouth calls includes the PS1 double reed bat cut perfect for soft early morning tree calls, the PS2 triple reed bat cut that makes loud and raspy yelps and cackles, the PS3 triple reed ghost cut that replicates high-pitched kee-kee runs, and the PS4 triple reed bat cut with

medium rasp that can be toned down for finishing gobblers.

Noteworthy Primos pot calls include the new Freak with a Frictionite surface and an integrated base that allows one-handed calling, as well as my personal favorite, the Foggy Bottom, which I've used to lure in several longbeards. It features a glass surface and Mossy Oak Bottomland camo finish. Don't forget to also stock Primos' Hoot Flute owl call, which is one of the best locator calls on the market. www.primos.com



"Catering to spring gobbler chasers makes good sense, because turkey hunting is one of the more gear-intensive outdoor sports."

Five Must-Stock Turkey Loads

Federal Heavyweight TSS features ultra-dense 18 g/cc Tungsten Super Shot. TSS is extremely popular right now among turkey hunters, especially .410-bore loads. 12- and 20-gauge loads also available. www.federalpremium.com



Hevi-Shot Hevi-18 TSS also uses 18 g/cc pellets and, like Federal's TSS loads, patterns exceptionally tight, even at longer yardages. It's available in 12, 20, .410, and new 28-gauge loads. www.hevishot.com



Hevi-Shot Magnum Blend is my personal go-to turkey load. This triplex load features number 5, 6, and 7 shot sizes of standard 12 g/cc tungsten Hevi-Shot. It comes in 12- and 20-gauge, as well as 10-gauge. www.hevishot.com



Remington Nitro Turkey is a non-plated lead load that's both affordable and effective. I've used it with great results on gobblers. It's available in several 12-gauge offerings, as well as one 20-gauge load. www.remington.com



Winchester Long Beard XR features copper-plated lead shot and Shot-Lok buffering to create tighter patterns at extended ranges, yet costs much less than tungsten shot. Available in several 12- and 20-gauge loads. www.winchester.com





FLEXTONE

Flextone's locator calls include the Lightning Owl (right, top) and Lightning Crow. Imitating owls first thing in the morning and crows later in the day can often spark a shock gobbler from an otherwise silent tom. Another way to fire up a longbeard is to use a gobbler call, like Flextone's Thunder Shaker Gobbler call (right, bottom). Mimicking gobblers is difficult on a box call and almost impossible with a mouth call (at least for me). A shaker-style gobbler call is easy to operate, but must be used cautiously so it doesn't attract other hunters.

For those who have difficulty mas-



tering a traditional diaphragm mouth call, Flextone offers the Thunder Yelper and Thunder Cluck-N-Purr hybrid mouth calls. Flextone also offers six standard diaphragm calls, a pair of Pot Luck calls with either a glass or slate surface, and the Beard Box call. www.flextonegamecalls.com

HUNTER'S SPECIALTIES

I've been using Hunter's Specialties' turkey calls for over 30 years. Marketed under the H.S. Strut brand, these affordable and effective turkey calls can be found almost everywhere, from the smallest farm-supply shop to the largest big-box store.

Top picks include the recently released Drury Outdoors Signature box call and Drury Outdoors Signature Tongue Series mouth call four-pack, which features four unique reed cuts designed by noted call-maker Mark Drury.

Personal favorites include the Raspy Old Hen box, which spends some time in my vest each season,



and the Triple Trauma box with an adjustable lid that allows hunters to sound like three different hens. I also like the Raspy Old Hen pot call and easy-to-blow Tone Trough series of diaphragm calls. However, you really can't go wrong with stocking any of H.S. Strut's various calls or combo packs. www.hsstrut.com



Sitka Ascent shirt and pant

ACCESSORIES

SITKA

Sitka apparel is gaining popularity among turkey hunters. Retailers should focus on the Traverse line, especially the Traverse Hoody and Traverse Pant. These garments are made of recycled materials and are extremely comfortable and tough. Another top pick is the Heavy-weight Hoody which is warm without the bulk.

Also consider stocking the Ascent line that consists of a lightweight shirt, gloves and pants for warm-weather hunting, and the windproof, Gore-Tex Jetstream Jacket (far right) for those chilly, blustery early-spring mornings. I have and use all of these items, and they cover the weather gamut from hot to cold. Another new item available this spring is the Turkey Tool Belt with all sorts of pockets for all sorts of gear.

Sitka has several Optifade camo patterns, but Subalpine (shown at right in the Ascent pant and shirt), Timber and Open Country work best for turkey hunting. www.sitkagear.com

ALPS OUTDOORZ

Alps Outdoorz is a leader in the outdoor industry, especially when it comes to turkey gear. "We work with retailers of all sizes," assured Kyle Cary, who handles marketing for Alps Brands. "Mom-and-pop stores have been the backbone of our company since our start 30 years ago."

For turkey hunters, best sellers include the Grand Slam and Super Elite turkey vests. The Grand Slam's removable kickstand frame sets it apart from other vests by allowing hunters to comfortably sit anywhere. The Super Elite is the



classic turkey vest with a fold-away seat pad and an incredible 22 pockets. I've got a Super Elite vest, and it has room for literally everything.

Other top picks include the Vanish and slightly larger Vanish MC low-profile chairs that allow turkey hunters to comfortably sit close to the ground. There's also the three-sided Dash Panel Blind that's much lighter and more portable than a full-size blind, yet keeps shotgun and archery hunters sufficiently hidden. www.alpsoutdoorz.com

CARLSON'S

Turkey hunters are always shopping for a new choke tube that will produce improved patterns from their shotgun. Carlson's makes some of the best and most affordable turkey chokes and will work with retailers of any and all sizes.

Two of Carlson's most popular chokes are the Long Beard XR and Heavyweight TSS. The ported Long Beard XR choke is designed for shooting Winchester Long Beard XR turkey ammo, but also works well with other turkey loads. The

Heavyweight TSS choke is designed for shooting Federal Heavyweight TSS turkey loads and features tighter constrictions than standard turkey chokes. Both are offered in 12-gauge, 20-gauge, and .410-bore.

The most popular thread patterns requested for Carlson's turkey chokes are Beretta/Benelli Mobil, Remington Rem-choke, Winchester/Browning Invector, Winchester/Browning Invector Plus, and Benelli Crio Plus. www.choketube.com **HR**





Must-Have Mountain Hunting Accessories

For hunters who are living off their back, having the right equipment/tools is critical to staying out in the field without risking injury.

BY DAVID REARICK

For mountain hunters, items in their backpack must meet three important criteria. First, the items must be functional, meaning that they must serve a critical purpose for both hunting and survival. Second, they must be durable, ensuring that hunters aren't dealing with finicky pieces that break or get lost, thus leaving them without a critical asset. And lastly, they must be lightweight and compact, as every ounce on your back matters and space in a pack is always at a premium.



For most hunters, a mountain hunt involves five to 10 days living off their back, allowing them to set up spike camps where the game is rather than having to traverse the mountain each day in search of game. This style of hunting requires fitness and mental endurance to battle the elements and unforeseen obstacles. While these aforementioned hunter attributes are important, the gear they choose is equally critical and can be the difference between success or succumbing to Mother Nature and the mountain. Simply put, little things like a non-functional stove, a broken backpack strap, or a leaking tent can ruin months or even years of planning in an instant.

When hunters start to prepare their packing list, clothing should be a priority. While the intent of this article focuses on mountain hunting accessories, it would be short-sighted not to skim the surface, as clothing is one of or potentially the most critical piece of equipment a hunter will need. To simplify, clothing is what keeps a hunter warm, ensures



they stay dry, and allows them to endure cold weather, rain or snow comfortably. First and foremost, hunters should employ a layering system starting at a base layer and including mid and outer layers that meet all three criteria of functionality, durability and lightness. While pants and jackets are important, don't overlook the importance of quality socks, gloves and headwear.

The brand and type of clothing a hunter chooses comes down to personal preference, but a good rule of thumb is to avoid cotton, use merino or alpaca wool wherever possible, and always include a good waterproof outer layer that isn't just water-resistant. While there are many hunting-specific brands out there, quality mountain apparel is sold for many

purposes, so don't overlook brands that sell quality gear not designed specifically for hunters.

When hunters decide to go mountain hunting, the equipment purchase/planning starts with a backpack. From there, careful gear selection is required to fill up said pack's interior with the gear that is necessary (and that fits). A good rule of thumb is to develop a packing list that can be checked off as gear is selected and then checked off again just prior to the hunt to ensure it makes the trip. It's not a bad idea to offer your customers a sample packing list — with your store's logo on it, of course. This is my personal mostly brand-agnostic packing list, less clothing, to showcase the depth and thoroughness required.



NEEDS/MUST-HAVES:

- ▶ Backpack, with rain cover
- ▶ Backpack attachments including gun holder, GPS pouches, etc.
- ▶ Tent
- ▶ Sleeping bag
- ▶ Sleeping pad
- ▶ Water bladder and bottle
- ▶ Water purification system (tablets, filter, etc.)
- ▶ GPS
- ▶ Binoculars
- ▶ Rangefinder
- ▶ Satellite phone (can be rented by the group)
- ▶ Headlamp w/ two extra sets of batteries
- ▶ Stove, with fuel
- ▶ Dry bags — enough for all gear that can be damaged/ruined by moisture
- ▶ Bowl/plate set, w/ multi-function spork
- ▶ Knives — one solid blade and one with replaceable blades
- ▶ Small sharpening stone
- ▶ Meat bags
- ▶ Trekking poles

WANTS:

- ▶ Spotting scope, with tripod
- ▶ Inflatable glassing pad
- ▶ Solar charging station
- ▶ Body wipes, for dry showers
- ▶ Lightweight axe for chopping water or driving tent stakes
- ▶ A small folding shovel
- ▶ Portable battery charger
- ▶ Chewing gum, mints or candy
- ▶ Sleeping pillow
- ▶ Handwarmers

For hunters attempting their first mountain hunt, this list is daunting and, frankly, expensive. While both of those things are absolutely true, the needs on this list are critical to having an enjoyable adventure and coming home safely at the end of it. While most hunters will have bits and pieces of all these things in their arsenal, items like backpacks, tents and stoves shouldn't necessarily be the same items they'd use for a week-end family vacation in the summer,



Gear Recommendations

Cooking Stove – Jetboil Flash Cooking System

This system is simply, durable and effective. It uses canister fuel that is readily available in most regions close to the airport. It boils water fast both for sanitation and cooking purposes, reducing the frustration of waiting for dinner. Purchased with a utensil set, it makes for a lightweight solution to ensure hunters have warm meals each day.

Dehydrated Food – Mountain House Adventures Meals

Pre-packaged meals with sufficient calories that taste good. Lightweight and compact, allowing hunters to minimize food weight and space without sacri-

ficing on having a good dinner at the end of the day.

Trekking Poles – LEKI Legacy Lite

Lightweight, durable and comfortable are all things LEKI trekking poles have to offer. They collapse when not in use and are light enough not to forgo them in lieu of other gear.

Trekking Pole Add-On - Quick-StiX trekking pole adapters

A great way to turn trekking poles into shooting sticks! These are lightweight and easy to use.

Backpack - Stone Glacier Sky 5900 Pack with Xcurve Frame

A great pack for a week-long outing. Can handle up to 150 pounds when packing out meat using the expandable load shelf that adds an additional 2,500 cubic inches. Pack can convert from 4,300 up to 5,900 cubic inches with the addition of the Sky Lid, allowing for multi-hunt use.

Knife – Havalon Piranta Edge

Uses removable/replaceable blades. Can handle everything from quartering to caping in a lightweight package using surgical-style blades. Allows hunters to avoid the need for sharpening blades by simply replacing the blade with a new one. For hunters looking for a more conventional-style knife blade, check out Havalon's REDI.

Sleeping Bag – Big Agnes Anvil Horn 0°F

Includes treated down to repel water and an excellent temperature rating for most types of hunting. It is roomy inside and has a Pillow Barn to keep your pillow or rolled up jacket in place when sleeping. It also has a Flex Pad Sleeve that easily connects a pad to the bag to keep it in place.

Add-On Sleeping Pad - NeoAir Xlite NXT Sleeping Pad

Super lightweight and packs down small. Adds 4.5 R-value to a sleeping setup and easily inflates without blowing your lugs out. It even comes with a repair kit, just in case.



as they are often the wrong size or too heavy, thus ruling them out for hunters who must carry everything on their backs.

TENTS

Possibly the most important item to keep them dry and warm next to clothing, tents for hunters should be either hunting-specific or mountaineering options to keep size and weight to a minimum. If a multi-person hunt is on the books, hunters can look to share the load and buy a two- to three-person tent, but remember that even a two-person tent is small, and if you get socked in with rain, it will be a tight fit for two hunters and gear.

When it comes down to the type of tent, manufacturers make standard three- or four-season tents, tepee-style tents, tents that accommodate heating stoves, and even

minimalist tents that are essentially just a rain cover. Tent selection boils down to where and when the hunt will take place. For warmer-weather hunts, perhaps a minimalist tent is sufficient, but for later-season hunts with snow, a stove-capable tent might become a must.

BACKPACKS

While tents are important, hunters can't even bring a tent if they don't have the right backpack. Like tents, there are many different manufacturers of backpacks designed for backcountry hunting. Selecting the type of pack is important, as some are expandable for packing out meat, some have integral frames, and others are more basic and lightweight.

To select the right backpack, start by determining the duration of the hunt. While having a larger pack is good for multi-hunt use, it also often tricks hunters into

bringing gear they don't need because they have space. Remember, a pack on flat ground weighing 75 pounds may seem manageable, but that all changes when you start gaining elevation. Fifty pounds is a common goal weight, and this number includes all gear, food, and the weapon of choice, so selecting a lightweight pack that has enough room is critical.

As a rule of thumb, 3,000 to 4,000 cubic inches is good for a two- to three-day outing, 5,000 to 6,000 is required for week-long adventures, and 7,000-plus is necessary for 10- to 14-day hunts. While the needed gear for these hunts is often the same, food takes up a lot of the space, so the longer the trip, the bigger the pack to carry the necessary nourishment.

STOVES

Focusing on cooking, not heating, stoves, they are broken down by fuel type. Three fuel types are available: canister, liquid and alternative heating (wood or pellets). For most mountain hunters, canister stoves like Jetboil are a popular choice. They include a cooking vessel that doubles as a bowl and are simple, durable and quick to heat up. With all stoves, remember, most fuel cannot be taken on a plane, so if your hunters intend to fly, they should plan to buy fuel locally at their destination before hitting the mountain.

All backpack hunts require extensive preparation to make them enjoyable, successful, and safe. By selecting the right gear for your pack, hunters are helping to ensure that regardless of punching a tag, they won't be left on the mountain missing a critical piece of equipment. **HR**



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FOOTWEAR FOR ALL SEASONS

Help your customer find the perfect hunting boots based on conditions and season.

BY MARK KAKKURI

Virtually every sport has a specific footwear solution to go with it, and for obvious reasons: cleats to dig into turf; court shoes to enhance quick, lateral movements; running shoes to protect against the damage from pounding from miles of pavement; even bowling shoes to provide the right amount of slide. Sometimes we simply opt for normal sneakers when there isn't any particular need other than a comfortable shoe for general moving around.



Hunting really isn't any different, as the quest for game calls for footwear suited to a variety of conditions. This includes knowing the terrain, understanding the possibilities for weather, and preparing as much as possible for the myriad other circumstances hunters face in the field, forest, prairie or plain. Some hunting footwear may be able to function in multiple roles or environments, but mostly the type of hunting lends itself to a specific type of hunting footwear solution.

Remind your customers they can plan all they want for an upcoming hunt, but if their footwear isn't suited to the task — the wrong type or low quality — the experience may prove to be an exercise in misery. Hurting feet, cold feet, wet feet, unsupported or unprotected ankles — any one of these is enough to make literally every step of a hunt a reason for regret.

And with so many innovative footwear solutions available today, the days of buying a general hunting footwear solution are probably waning, even if there are good general hunting shoes and boots still available. The problem is, many customers just aren't aware of what's available. And it's your job to learn about their actual needs, helping them consider not only the many factors their feet may face on an upcoming hunt but also how to be properly equipped to handle them. Moreover, it's your job to do this helpfully and winsomely, letting them be in control of the shopping experience while carefully guiding them to an appropriate footwear solution.

Here's the key: You may know within 10 seconds of interacting with a customer exactly what hunting footwear he or she needs. What you need to do is take the right amount of time to have them learn and discover — for themselves — how to



think through a purchase like this. The goal is not merely for a customer to leave the store having made a purchase. Give them the opportunity to own the decision, grow their understanding, and see you as a trusted resource. That'll help bring them back.

So, here are a handful of questions to ask customers who are shopping

for hunting footwear:

First, simply ask them what they're looking for. Customers in search of a "general-purpose hunting boot to keep their feet warm and dry" probably have different needs compared to customers who are in search of "a supportive boot for an upcoming elk-hunting trip out West." The customer who just wants to keep his or

↑ Even customers who know what kind of boot they want will need help navigating brands and styles.



"You may know within 10 seconds of interacting with a customer exactly what hunting footwear he or she needs. What you need to do is take the right amount of time to have them learn and discover — for themselves — how to think through a purchase like this."



her feet warm and dry while outside may not need an actual hunting boot. So get to know their situation. What is the environment or activity they're planning to engage in? Caring for horses at a barn? Snowshoeing at the local golf course? Working at a car wash? Running a power-washing business? A daily hike on a local trail? Each of these activities has different circumstances potentially affecting their choice of footwear.



↑ Your store should have a comfortable spot for customers to try on boots. A bench makes things easier!

Second, once the need for an actual hunting boot is clear, learn as much as you can about the type of hunting he or she will be doing. Has he or she hunted before? What was that experience like? Do they own similar footwear and what do they think of it? Will the upcoming hunt be a one-time activity or recurring? What will the temperature be like during the hunt? Other weather conditions? What's the terrain or topography like? All of these factors, of course, affect footwear choices for the hunter, and you can help with



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- ▶ GORE-TEX (GTX)
- ▶ 100% waterproof and breathable GORE-TEX liners
- ▶ 600G Thinsulate Ultra insulation
- ▶ Danner Bob® Outsole

WETLANDS

MUCK BOOT WETLAND BOOT

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- ▶ 5mm CR Flex-Foam neoprene liner
- ▶ Breathable mesh lining
- ▶ Stretch-fit topline binding
- ▶ Extended rubber coverage for added protection
- ▶ Lightweight, cushioned EVA midsole for added comfort
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- ▶ Molded nylon arch shank
- ▶ Merrell Air Cushion
- ▶ Super Rebound Compound midsole with 20% recycled rubber flecks
- ▶ Vibram® Ecostep Recycle outsole designed with 30% recycled rubber



prioritizing them. For example, does the type of hunting demand lots of movement? Will the hunter need to carry any extra weight? Is the terrain flat or hilly, smooth or rocky? Or will the hunter need to remain in one location for a long time, perhaps in the cold? Questions like these will help build rapport and focus you and your staff on the most helpful solutions.

Additionally, after determining some of the logistical needs of the hunter, interact with him or her about other boot features. Find out, for example, if the hunter needs a boot with a specific height, a factor related to the amount of support needed or protection desired. Also, ask about the desired thermal properties — and be ready to explain types of insulation, how much is needed, whether it needs to be removable or



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replaceable, and what socks may be needed (a natural lead-in to additional purchases). You've already asked him or her about how much they anticipate moving; take time to understand how their feet function (or may function) during the hunt. Some people need less insulation and more breathability in a hunting boot.

Third, if it hasn't yet been brought up by the customer, ask now about their budget. Keep in mind the whole hunting boot discussion may be new to him or her, and there may be some sticker shock when learning about some of the capable footwear available. Encourage the customer to consider investing more now instead of possibly under-buying and needing to buy additional footwear later. This is the classic "buy once, cry once" scenario where it's considered better

to pay for a high-quality item once as opposed to buying a low-quality item that doesn't meet the needs or that wears out too quickly, resulting in the need for a second purchase.

Additional discussion may yield an opportunity to talk about the pros and cons of footwear made from synthetic vs natural materials, exactly what manufacturers mean when they say a boot is "waterproof," and more. In any case, maintain a keen interest in learning more about your customers by asking good questions and being a trusted resource for them. It won't be long until they're the ones asking questions of you. Then the dialogue will grow into many meaningful conversations about how having the right gear made a huge difference in the overall experience of the hunt. **HR**

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AVERTISSEMENT: Utilisez cette munition seulement avec des armes à feu de bonne qualité et en bon état. Gardez le canon libre de tout obstacle. Portez toujours une protection auditive et oculaire pour votre sécurité. Une munition chargée de façon incorrecte peut causer des dommages à l'arme et des blessures personnelles. Si vous obtenez un feu blanc, gardez l'arme pointée dans une direction sûre, attendez 30 secondes et réessayez. Utilisez toujours le type de cartouche correct et les données de charge appropriées. Utilisez toujours le type de cartouche correct et les données de charge appropriées.





Spaghetti Western?

Italian renditions of frontier firearms revive top U.S. designs with an old-time fit and finish – affordably!

BY WAYNE VAN ZWOLL

Sergio Leone gets the credit. It was he who, in the 1960s, pioneered profitable “Westerns” filmed in Europe (not just Italy) and produced and directed by Italians. Spanish journalist Alfonso Sanchez may have coined the term “spaghetti Western” to describe these films. (For what it’s worth, the Japanese know the subgenre as “macaroni Western.”) Actors and languages in these films represented many nations; subtitles were common. Filming took place on various sites, but the landform and vegetation of the American Southwest, where many tales were set, had a near match in the Tabernas Desert of southeastern Spain.



Popular use of the term “spaghetti Western” and the popularity of the films themselves has faded in recent decades, but the Italian connection to firearms of our frontier West has grown stronger on a wave of enthusiasm for period rifles and revolvers.

Arid, perilous and unforgiving, the frontier took a heavy toll on pilgrims — and on their firearms.

Pristine specimens of the rifles and sidearms used in the West during the 1870s and '80s are now scarce, and they fetch steep prices from collectors. Italian reproductions fill a market niche for period arms of new manufacture, strong enough to fire smokeless loads but true to traditional designs and even markings.

You could trace this renaissance to Leonard Frank Allen, who founded Replica Arms in 1962, in El Paso. His 1847 Colt was produced by Armi San Marco. Selling out in 1965, Allen moved to Santa Fe and started Western Arms — soon to become Allen Arms after a lawsuit by Winchester. Just over a decade later, back in Houston, Mike Harvey opened a sporting goods shop weighted heavily to muzzleloading rifles. This enterprise struggled in the '80s as oil prices sank. To bolster sales, Harvey joined Allen Arms in a venture to import revolvers from Italy's Uberti, gunmaker since 1959, and other respected Italian firms.

The first shipments of sidearms disappointed Harvey, a stickler for original form and detailing. He contacted Uberti with specific finishing instructions and insisted on moving required proof marks to less conspicuous places. Antique finishes and period engraving followed. Harvey's Cimarron Firearms has since expanded its offerings to include not only Colt revolvers, but Remingtons, Smith & Wessons and others. In rifles, it lists faithful reproductions

of Sharps, Spencers, Henrys and Winchesters.

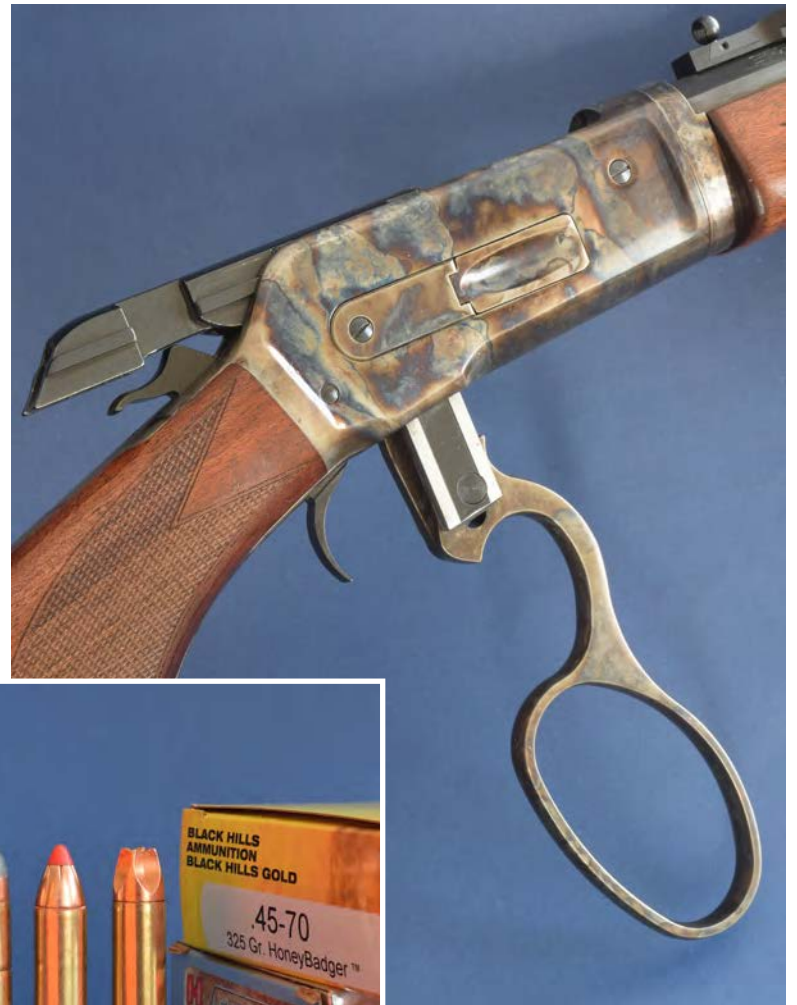
Besides a strong showing at Cowboy Action events, Cimarron rifles and revolvers have appeared in myriad films, including *Unforgiven*, *Lonesome Dove*, *The Lone Ranger* and *The Quick and the Dead*. Harvey has also commissioned and imported guns made famous on-screen, like Eastwood's revolvers in *Man With No Name* and Russell Crowe's character in *3:10 to Yuma*. Cimarron was first with a clone of Tom Selleck's Sharps rifle from *Quigley Down Under*.

↓ A lineup of old (Winchester, Remington) and new .45-70 loads suited to Italian-built lever rifles.



Cimarron reproduction firearms are suitable for use with modern mid-level smokeless loads, and many are more reliable and shoot more accurately than the originals, thanks to better steel and close-tolerance CNC machining, as well as tweaks to internal design.

Italy is home to the world's oldest gunmaker. Beretta began producing arquebus barrels in 1526. In 1815, after supplying arms to Napoleon's army, Pietro Beretta turned the company's focus to sporting arms.



↑ This Taylor's rendition of a Winchester 1886 shows John Browning's vertical bars and their bolt slots.

Beretta has owned Benelli Armi SpA (founded 1967) since 2000. Benelli rifles and shotguns come stateside in Accokeek, Maryland, via Stoeger, for Benelli USA. That shingle covers Franchi and Chapuis brands too, as well as reproductions by Uberti.

Aldo Uberti was born near Gardone Val Trompia, next to Brescia, Italy's gun-making center. The area had been mined for iron ore since the Roman Empire. Aldo was working as a stock polisher at age 9, and by 14 had enrolled in the Zanardelli

gun-making school. He apprenticed at Beretta.

In WWII, Aldo joined the Italian resistance movement, the Partigiani. Captured by the Nazis, he survived a German concentration camp. After armistice, he returned to the gunmaking trade, later setting up his own shop, Aldo Uberti Srl., to manufacture parts for the industry. In time, he was asked by a couple of U.S. businessmen to make functioning, affordable replicas of Civil War-era firearms, as originals had become



“A new market was emerging, fueled by interest in battle re-enactments and in shooting and hunting with firearms of the 1860s to 1880s.”

scarce and costly. A new market was emerging, fueled by interest in battle re-enactments and in shooting and hunting with firearms of the 1860s to 1880s. Like many Europeans, Aldo was enamored of the Old West. He took on the project.

His first effort was a replica of Colt’s 1851 revolver. Others followed. Aldo’s keen eye for detail and insistence on faithfully reproducing the look, fit and function of originals brought him early success. His 1873 Colt SAA revolvers and Winchester lever rifles got the attention of film director Sergio Leone, and Uberti replicas were soon on the silver screen. His Colt Walker appeared in 1969’s True Grit with John Wayne, and later in the hands of Clint Eastwood as The Outlaw Josey Wales. The 1990 film Dances With Wolves, starring Kevin Costner, boasted an all-Uberti cast of firearms. In 1993, Uberti’s blasted their way into Tombstone, with Kurt Russell and Val Kilmer.

A year after Aldo Uberti died in



↑ Uberti’s smooth-shucking ‘86 Hunter Lite is trim and pointable, with good sights and a fine fit and finish.

1988, the Beretta family bought his company and soon grew the product line. Investments in CNC machines sped manufacture. Capable management under Beretta Holdings has since has increased sales of Uberti-built firearms in the U.S. They’re now imported by Cimarron and Taylor’s (which deal directly with Uberti in Italy), as well as by Benelli



USA, whose five-year warranty and dealer-direct sales draw customers. Benelli USA also offers exclusive models, like the English “stalking rifle” in .303 British, designed in-house with input from product manager and history buff Tom Leoni.

OLD WEST RIFLES AND REPRODUCTIONS

Two types of “Old West guns” have unmatched pick-me-up appeal: Winchester lever rifles and Colt revolvers. Their origins date to the mid-1800s. Lever-actions evolved from Walter Hunt’s Volitional Repeater of 1849. Cycled by one finger, this rifle fed bullets from an under-barrel tube. Powder in each bullet’s base was fired by external priming. Twice sold, the prototype was improved by Lewis Jennings. After Horace Smith and Daniel Wesson gave it a primed cartridge, 40 investors bought it and established Volcanic Repeating Arms. It failed. One of the group, Oliver Winchester, paid \$40,000 for all assets. An 1860 patent by Benjamin Tyler Henry followed. “Fifteen shots

↓ Uberti, an old Italian gunmaker with a stellar reputation, built this 9mm SAA look-alike for Cimarron.

in 10 seconds!” crowed Winchester.

The Henry saw limited action in the Civil War, but its fearsome rate of fire spurred developments in repeating rifles. Mass production of interchangeable parts gave both the North and the South great stocks



of muzzleloading rifles. Their heavy balls were lethal, but the barrels were slow to recharge. And in the heat of battle, soldiers unwittingly rendered them useless. A report of 27,574 rifles collected after battle noted that 24,000 were charged, half with two loads each, a quarter with “from three to 10 loads.” One rifle had 23! “In some, the ball [was] at the bottom of the bore with the charge of powder on top...”

The Henry begat the first rifle to wear Winchester’s name: the Model 1866. On its heels came the Model 1873 in .44-40 (.44 W.C.F.), Winchester’s first centerfire cartridge. Sales of this rifle jumped in 1878, when Colt offered its Single-Action Army revolver in .44-40. With one type of ammunition, a man could feed rifle or sidearm, down to his last cartridge.

Still, as Winchester ’73s sold to the walls, the Army issued 1873 “trap-door” Springfields, converted with Eskine Allin’s .45-70 breech from muzzleloaders.

Buffalo hunters also preferred single-shot rifles and their powerful

“Oddly enough, lever-rifle cartridges dating to blackpowder days remained popular well into the 20th century.”



cartridges. William F. Cody became Buffalo Bill with a 50-caliber trap-door Springfield he called Lucretia Borgia, after the femme fatale in a Victor Hugo play. Shooting for the Army and railroad in 1867 and ’68, he reported killing 4,282 buffalo. Cody liked the ’73 repeater for “general hunting and Indian fighting,” and used it throughout the 30-year run of his Wild West Show. (When bullets from the Show broke greenhouse glass far from a New York arena, however, he ordered smooth-bore ’73s and .44-40 loads with a



← Uberti’s Tom Leoni had a hand in developing this handsome retro drop-block rifle in .303 British.

quarter-ounce of No. 7 shot!)

Meanwhile, Winchester vice president Thomas Bennett sought a rifle with the power to compete with Remington and Sharps single-shots. In Utah in 1883, he paid young John Browning \$8,000 for all rights to a rifle he’d designed and built without blueprints. It became Winchester’s Model 1885. Over the next 17 years, Bennett bought every Browning design, to keep his genius in-house. Browning adapted his single-shot’s vertical-lug lock-up to Winchester’s Model 1886 and short-action 1892. The ’92 became an international hit, selling more than a million copies before the last shipped in 1941.

The Browning-designed Model 1894, first in .32-40 and .38-55, was soon barreled to .25-35 and .30-30, our first smokeless hunting rounds. The Model 94 would top a produc-

↓ Twin slots in this Uberti 1886 bolt accept rising vertical bars Browning adapted from the lock-up of his single-shot rifle that became Winchester’s Model 1885.



Phony on Film?

Hollywood resurrected the post-Civil War frontier for movie-goers, not historians. In 1950, James Stewart and Shelley Winters headlined "Winchester '73." The story, directed by Anthony Mann, pivoted on a rifle match set in 1876. But the West wasn't tamed by Winchesters alone. William Castle gave the 1873 trapdoor Springfield a well-deserved title nod in his 1955 film, "The Gun That Won The West," starring Dennis Morgan and Paula Raymond. This single-shot rifle equipped the U.S. Army from 1873 to 1892. Its .45-70 bullets tumbled buffalo that shrugged off the anemic loads of early lever-actions. But in John Ford's "Rio Grande" (also released in 1950), John Wayne fought natives firing rifles not yet invented in 1879. Then came television's Chuck Connors as "The Rifleman," jacking a stream of empties from the carbine chattering at his hip with never-miss accuracy. Wayne and Connors both wielded Winchesters introduced in 1892, well after the make-believe action on-screen. But complaints were few. Who wanted to watch heroes or villains fumble cartridges one at a time into a rifle that opened from the top?

Oddly enough, I can't recall a film eulogy for Colt's 1873 Single Action Army. Still, it rode the dusty hips of actors from Hopalong Cassidy and Henry Fonda to Clint Eastwood and Kurt Russell.



↑ One Federal Fusion load from a Uberti 1886 Hunter Lite helped the author kill a big red-phase black bear.

tion total of seven million before the New Haven plant closed in 2006. Browning's last rifle for Winchester had a box magazine that permitted safe use of pointed bullets. The Model 1895 could also bottle pressures of powerful smokeless rounds like the .30-06 and .405 Winchester, beloved of Theodore Roosevelt.

Oddly enough, lever-rifle cartridges dating to blackpowder days remained popular well into the 20th century. Of the 16 most-named cartridges in a 1939 survey of 2,285 elk hunters in Washington state, only four were exclusive to bolt-actions. The rest served lever rifles, some only lever rifles!

By WWII, all 19th-century Winchester lever rifles except the Model 94 had been discontinued.



↑ Wayne found Uberti's 7-pound 1886 Hunter Lite easy to shoot accurately with its practical open sights.

(Marlin lever-actions, dating to the Model 1881, had taken a parallel track. The Model 36, progeny of the Model 1893 that battled Winchester's 94 at market, came in 1937. Marlin's 336 followed in '48.)

Serviceable pre-war Winchester lever-actions, unmarred and unaltered, are now pricey. So I was blessed to cradle an original Winchester 1886

one frosty Dakota dawn, bellying through thin pines on a prairie rise. The big, shaggy beast ahead was quartering off, still as a stone, staring as if back into time. I elbowed within 50 yards and quietly thumbed the hammer. The bead settled. Report and impact came as one. I spilled the case and fired again. One more shot, and the animal sank gently to earth, releasing its hold on the past, when the prairie was dark with its kind. Remnant groups of bison thrive on prairie laced with wire, but the vast herds will not return — nor will I



shoot another bull.

The .45-70 in hand that day was a very plain 1886, but pristine. My Blue Book of Gun Values prices it at \$6,500. Hoo boy! No wonder the rush to imported reproductions!

Short months ago, I hunted with Uberti's 1886 Hunter Lite reproduction of Winchester's '86. Its slender 22-inch barrel keeps weight to just over 7 pounds. The half magazine holds three .45-70 rounds. Uberti hewed closely to John Browning's original action, refined by ace Winchester mechanic William Mason. Twin vertical bars engage slots to lock the bolt. No need to baby this rifle; Uberti's '86 action is stout enough for mid-grade .45-70 loads. The case-colored receiver and blued barrel and action components are well-



shaped, polished and finished. The lever accepts my big fingers. Cycling is like spinning greased marbles in races. There's no rattle in battery. Thumbing the hammer is easy. The trigger breaks cleanly at 4 pounds.

The middle step of the elevator rib in the drift-adjustable semi-buckhorn rear sight gives me a 50-yard zero when the flat-faced 3/32 "gold" bead settles in the U notch. While I'd like a bit more beef in the comb, the rifle points well. After a few tosses to

shoulder, the sights align naturally.

Hawked as "Select, A-grade American Walnut," the well-fitted wood on my Hunter Lite is plain as a fencepost, if nicely matched in color fore and aft. The checkered pistol grip is open in its sweep, as I like. The smooth forend is pleasingly slim but substantial enough to control. It is properly not snugged to the barrel or tight between receiver and forend cap. A swivel stud on that cap mates with a two-screw QD stud

↑ The success of Uberti reproduction lever-actions has brought revivals of other rifles, like this '74 Sharps.

← A top-seller now, the 9mm Luger post-dated Colt's SAA. Uberti brought the cartridge and pistol together.

in the buttstock. The black, crisply contoured, 3/4-inch recoil pad is handsome and comfy.

In range trials, the Hunter Lite gobbled loads with hollowpoint, flat-point and Hornady's pointed FTX bullets. No hiccups. Three of four 300-grain Federal Fusion bullets cut a linear 1-inch group at 50 steps. At 100 yards, three 325-grain FTXs shot into 2¾ inches. More important than bench accuracy in a lever rifle is its handling. The Hunter Lite

has a gunny, carnivorous feel, with baton-perfect balance.

That Uberti followed me to Alberta. For most of a week, big black bears kept to themselves. Then one evening, an enormous rust-hued bear eased from the forest's shadow, stood on its hind legs and rubbed its back on a naked spruce. I declined the chancy shot. Back on all fours, the animal was instantly gone. Daylight ebbed fast. Suddenly, the beast reappeared. Pale light from the west lit the bead. At the .45-70's blast, the bear fell, recovered, and dashed off. After a minute's listen, I moved carefully through the windfall. The bear lay dead a few yards on.

Uberti lists the 1886 Hunter Lite for \$2,289.

Another fine Italian reproduction of Winchester's '86 crossed my path briefly a few years ago. It came from Taylor's & Co, launched in 1988 by Sue Hawkins McFarland after she'd worked her way to a management



post in Italy's firearms industry. With daughter Tammy Loy, she keeps the legend alive with high-quality arms from Pietta, Uberti, Pedersoli and Chiappa. Besides Winchesters and Colt SAAs, Taylor's catalogs reproductions of Henrys, Spencers and 1874 Sharps single-shots, also Colt's Lightning pump. The 1886 I used had custom touches, including a half-octagon barrel and a Skinner sight on a rail. It carried with me long enough to kill a whitetail buck.

OLD WEST SIDEARMS AND REPRODUCTIONS

While rifles had the greater utility, survival on our post-Civil War frontier often hinged on sidearms. James Butler Hickok is said to have shot a felon through the heart at 100 steps with one of his 1851 Colts. Better documented is the path of the .45 bullet that crashed through the back of Wild Bill's skull as he played cards in Deadwood one August day in 1876. Jack McCall was hauled back to town and hung.

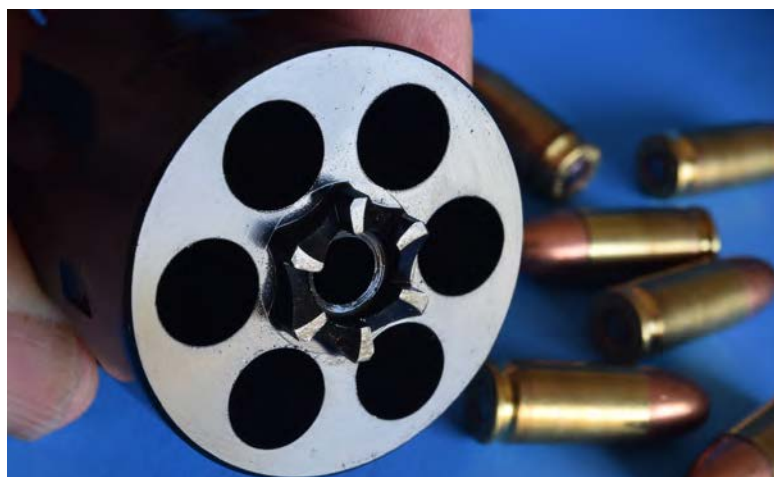
Colt's SAA revolver roared into a new century, then limped through the Depression. In 1940, Colt dropped it. A second generation of SAAs would appear in 1956 and run until 1975.

Early Colts now come very dear. Blue Book value of a turn-of-the-century SAA in 95% condition: from \$17,000! So Italy's gunmakers are busy. Craftsmen and women who've yet to visit the Rockies are building revolvers used half a world away before they were born! In my view, reproductions by Uberti compare favorably in fit, feel and function with the Colts they mimic. In some respects, they're mechanically superior.

Italy can also deliver what Colt could not. Example: Uberti's SAA in 9mm. The 9mm Luger (or 9mm Parabellum or 9x19, circa 1902) has



↑ Original features and details matter to enthusiasts. This Uberti has a proper hammer nose and no transfer bar.



↑ This beautifully machined Uberti cylinder headspaces 9mm cartridges on the mouth. The revolver is imported by Cimarron.



↑ A fine 25-yard group was wrecked by horsing the trigger once! No fault of Uberti's pistol or BHA ammo.

fed service pistols since its adoption by the German Navy and Army in 1904 and '08. While purists growl that it post-dates the Old West and earned much of its street cred in foreign autoloaders, the 9mm is hugely popular. Legions of loads from every major ammo-maker include some that rival bigger, more violent rounds in terminal effect. Bulk lots of 9mm hardball pull per-cartridge cost well below that of "practice" ammo in .45 Colt, .44-40 or .357 Magnum, even .38 Special.

My Uberti 9mm is of the Cimarron Cattleman series I'd first met in .45 Colt. The 9 boasts a brass grip-frame and guard, case-colored frame, blued cylinder and barrel, walnut stocks. The finely checkered hammer nixes slips without lacerating my thumb. The cylinder isn't designed for clips. Its six chambers are precisely bored so the rimless 9mm cartridges headspace at the mouth.

Easing the hammer through its three notches will impress anyone who's used a range of six-guns. Parts move silkily, with crisp clicks. At the range, my first five sub-sonic Black Hills 147-grain bullets printed a 2½-inch group at 25 yards. As shots that don't land where fixed sights line up annoy me, I was pleased these bullets struck within 2 inches of point of aim. Another group with the 147s cut a four-shot tear you could hide with a .38-55 hull. Then, on the last shot, I tugged the muzzle down. Arrggh!

Uberti sells a dual-cylinder 9mm/.357 rendition of this single-action. Of course, you'll find similar models in traditional chamberings, .45 Colt and .44-40 to the less common .38-40 and .32-20. As with rifles patterned after frontier models, you — or your customers — may find the romance of the Old West is as close as Italy. **HR**



Preparing for an ATF Inspection

Are you ready for an inspection if ATF investigators come knocking?

BY CAROLEE ANITA BOYLES

If ATF Industry Operations Investigators showed up at your door tomorrow morning, would you be ready? All FFLs need to be prepared and ready to survive an ATF inspection, whether it's tomorrow, next week, next month or next year. NSSF Compliance Consultants Judy Bender and Wally Nelson conducted a webinar on preparing for an ATF audit on June 5, 2023. Drawing from their many years of ATF and NSSF consulting experience, they reviewed business practices and compliance procedures that FFLs have and should employ to pass compliance inspections.

"The seminar covered things that FFLs should be doing every single day so they don't get caught up short," Bender said. "Most of these are basic things that retailers need to do. For instance, more than one person should be reviewing their records every day."

WHAT TRIGGERS AN INSPECTION?

One thing Bender and Nelson covered is what might trigger an inspection.

"We will talk about things like a lot of traces, and if there are a lot of guns that were sold recently and are getting traced," Bender said before the webinar. "If that's happening, they are selling to people who are straw purchasers, so maybe they need to tighten up their training on that."

ABSENTEE OWNERS

One thing that came up is absentee owners.



"This is not a business where you can be an absentee owner," she said. "You really have to be there daily. If ATF comes in and the owner is not there and is on vacation, you've got to have someone there who really knows the system inside and out, because ATF is not going to wait for the owner to come back; you've got to have someone there who really knows what's going on all the time."

ELECTRONIC RECORD KEEPING

Nelson and Bender also covered electronic record keeping.

"A lot of things are going electronic now," Bender said. "Many retailers are using the electronic 4473, and they need to make sure the employees know the program and know how to help customers with it."

FOLLOW-UP AFTER A WARNING LETTER

Also, if you've had a warning letter

or a warning conference, Bender said, there are additional things you should be doing every day and every month to be sure you don't have the same problem again.

"Once you have that warning conference, the next step is revocation no matter what, if ATF finds that you are doing the same things," she said. "If you've had any action like this, one thing you should be doing is monthly inventories at least for the first year, to be sure your bound book entries are accurate and that there are no missing guns."

MANUFACTURER CONSIDERATIONS

Bender said ATF also is starting to take a harder look at what manufacturers are doing.

"Even though retailers don't have to deal with these things, we are going to talk about a couple of specific infractions that are unique to

manufacturers," she said.

"We're also going to talk a little about NFA (the National Firearms Act) and the forms that FFLs need to keep that are unique to the registered guns," Bender said before the webinar. "We're going to talk about pistol braces [Editor's note: The pistol brace situation has since changed and continues to evolve]. What I have noticed about those forms when I go into retailers is that they have the registration forms, but they don't necessarily have them the way the regulations require them to."

BUSINESS CHANGES

One more big issue that many retailers may not be aware of is business changes that may make their FFL to be invalid.

"Have you changed your corporation?" Bender asked. "Have you gone from a partnership to an LLC? If so, you may need a new license. You may be operating without a license, and if you have NFA weapons, that's a big problem for you. If ATF comes in and that's the case, they may seize those guns."

NSSF WEBINARS

This webinar and others in the 2023 Firearms Industry Compliance Education Series are available for NSSF members to watch online at www.pathlms.com/nssf/courses. Not an NSSF Member? Visit NSSF.org/Membership or reach out to the member services team at membership@nssf.org. To learn more about NSSF's SHOT University Online, visit nssf.org/education. **HR**





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The battle lines are drawn for us and the stakes are high.

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HUNTING RETAILER GEAR ROUNDUP

Trail Cameras

Outfit your hunting patrons with the best in modern scouting camera technology to help them keep a watchful eye on wildlife.

BY GORDY KRAHN

Minimizing human disturbance is critical for hunters who want to keep deer and other wild creatures calm and moving naturally on their properties. And one of the biggest challenges they face is that they must encroach on these sanctuaries during spring and summer in order to gain intel for developing a strategic fall hunting plan. Of course, this leaves human scent not only while they're there, but long after they leave the area — and there's really nothing they can do to completely eliminate it. Plus, the

sounds they make moving in and out of the area are alarming to wildlife. If they're lucky, this will have minimal impact on deer activity. However, if they overdo it, it can alter deer behavior — turning them nocturnal, or completely chasing them off the property.

Fortunately, using proper scouting techniques — which include scent control and the use of high-tech scouting cameras — can minimize this disturbance, while gaining valuable insight that will help in the planning of a successful hunting

season. Trail cameras are a valuable tool that enables users to determine deer demographics, trophy potential, movement patterns, daytime activity, etc. — all important factors for monitoring the deer herd on a property.

Trail cameras are also useful for keeping a watchful eye on a property, strategically placed to monitor unwanted human activity at outbuildings, gates, game trails, interior roads, etc. — to determine if there are encroachment issues. Most models are capable of taking still images and videos and capturing photos in

complete darkness with no visible flash. Catching an intruder has never been easier with the help of trail cameras for security surveillance, and monitoring a property will help keep problems with poachers, trespassers, burglars and vandals at bay.

Pure and simple, hunters who do not use scouting cameras to patrol their properties are operating with one hand tied behind their back. Help them get the most out of their scouting and security efforts by steering them toward these top-shelf models.

Black Gate R4G Lite

The R4G Lite Cell Camera from Black Gate (\$139.99) is built with top-of-the-line 4G/LTE technology, with a trigger speed of less than .04 second that ensures users won't miss a thing. It is equipped with proprietary Dual Lens and Dual Sensor technology, and its anti-fog lenses and weatherproof housing ensure the R4G Lite will continue to perform no matter what Mother Nature throws at it. Other features include No Glow 940NM and motion-blur technology, an anti-fog/weather-proof housing, 12V external port for a solar panel or battery pack, and an easy-to-use Black Gate app for camera management, photo viewing and image downloading in full HD. Cell plans start as low as \$3 per month with auto tower detection. www.blackgatehunting.com



Browning Trail Cameras Defender Pro Scout Max HD

The 2024 Defender Pro Scout Max HD Cellular Trail Camera from Browning Trail Cameras (\$149.99) delivers robust cell camera technology and a complete set of new, high-performance features. First and foremost is its new All HD All the Time technology that allows the camera to transmit images with more than five times the detail of standard cellular thumbnails. Throw in on-demand picture and video technology, an ultra-high-gain cellular antenna and an auto-detection feature that will automatically find the cellular network with the best signal available, and users will have the tools for a great cell camera experience. Other features include 22MP image capability, On Demand Picture and Video technology, GPS-tagged images and much more.

www.browningtrailcameras.com



Bushnell CelluCORE Live Cellular

Bushnell's CelluCORE Live (\$299.99) is a feature-rich trail camera with Dual SIM cellular connectivity and live streaming video on demand so users can check in on their property no matter what time it is and no matter where they are, automatically connecting to the strongest network signal available. This means it connects, receives and sorts high-quality photos and video faster. The CelluCORE Live also features an optimized antenna for better signal transmission, high output No Glow IR LEDs for 100-foot night range, extended battery life, as well as image sorting by weather, wind, moon phase and more. Data plans are available starting at \$9.99 per month, and purchasers of the CelluCORE Live get their first 30 days free. www.bushnell.com



Cuddeback Tracks

Cuddeback's Tracks Cellular Trail Camera (\$149.99) is built on a small ergonomic platform that maximizes the features users are looking for in a cellular trail camera. Historically, lesser cell cameras have been plagued by poor or spotty coverage and mediocre image quality. The new Tracks camera combats this issue with the integration of dual external paddle antennas for superior LTE reception in fringe areas. Tracks uses an advanced IR-cut image sensor resulting in better image quality and reliability and supports connectivity to all Cuddeback accessories. The Tracks Cellular Trail Camera allows users to access images four different ways: smartphone app, email, text messaging and online web interface. www.cuddeback.com



Moultrie Micro-32i Kit Two-Pack

What's better than one powerful new Micro-32i Trail Camera? Getting two, with this convenient scouting camera kit from Moultrie (\$149.99). The cameras feature high-resolution 32MP images, HD video (1280x720), multiple capture modes and invisible flash technology. The kit includes two green Micro-32i game cameras, four AA batteries per camera and two heavy-duty installation straps. They have a trigger speed of .5 seconds, detection range of 70 feet and flash range of 80 feet. The Micro-32i is Moultrie Mobile compatible when connected with a modem and comes with a two-year warranty. SD cards are sold separately. www.moultriefeeders.com



Reconyx Hyperfire 2 Cellular Covert IR

Now including Intellitag Smart AI Image Recognition, which enables the user to filter images to see what they are most interested in, the HyperFire 2 Camera from Reconyx (\$599.99) is now 4G LTE cellular enabled. This allows the user to receive images almost anywhere in the world through a mobile app for Android or iOS. Cost-effective data plans are available directly through Reconyx starting at only \$5 per month with no long-term contracts, with plans through Verizon or AT&T networks in the United States as well as an international program for use almost anywhere in the world. Utilizing the mobile app, users can create a custom cellular plan, manage images and check status or change camera settings from anywhere. www.reconyx.com



Spypoint Force-Pro-S

The Force-Pro-S Trail Camera from Spypoint (\$199.99) takes its quality camera and makes it even better by adding a solar panel used to charge an internal lithium battery to keep the unit powered for weeks and months on end. Users can capture images at an incredible 30 megapixels resolution and take 4K videos so they capture all the action in great detail. The added benefit of extended battery life means fewer trips afield to service batteries and the cost savings of not having to replace them. Other key features include photo and video modes, .2-second trigger speed, 90-foot flash range and 110-foot detection range. www.spypoint.com



ADD/Stealth Cam Revolver

The Revolver 360-degree Cellular Trail Camera from Stealth Cam (\$159.99) covers six zones to deliver a complete panorama of its surroundings. This means users get a full 360 degrees of visibility, day and night, to ensure they never miss a thing — even deer passing behind where the lens is positioned. They can now enjoy the equivalent of six cameras worth of coverage in a single device. Thanks to a silent, pivoting motor, the Revolver offers the option of getting more than one photo from a single vantage when a zone is triggered. The camera responds quickly to movement, situating its lens in the correct zone to deliver high-quality images and videos in real time, making it ideal for use on food plots. www.stealthcam.com



BY GORDY KRAHN

HUNTING RETAILER NEW PRODUCTS

EASTON 4MM PREMIER MATCH GRADE HALF-OUT INSERTS

Easton Archery's new 4mm Match Grade Half-Out Precision Inserts have been engineered with insights from top archers and pro shops. The result is a groundbreaking design that redefines accuracy and toughness while offering a new level of customization to the ultra-micro-diameter arrow category. The new Easton Match Grade Half-out construction allows for different materials to be used in specific areas, which further increases strength and provides a broad range of weight options. The 55-grain aluminum, 75-grain half steel and 100-grain titanium/steel half-outs are offered in five sizes to ensure a perfect fit for the entire spectrum of Easton 4mm arrows. A 150-grain full-steel variant is offered for those seeking a higher level of front-of-center balance. NA. www.eastonarchery.com



FEDERAL AMMUNITION .223 REM. CENTERSTRIKE AMMO

Federal Ammunition's 77-grain .223 Rem. Gold Medal CenterStrike Ammunition features a proprietary open tip match design, sleek profile and extremely tight specifications for improved long-range accuracy and consistency. This new load has a precision-built OTM bullet design, high ballistic coefficient, Federal's tightest specs for accuracy, pressure and velocity, Gold Medal primers and brass and specially formulated propellant and leaves the barrel at 2,720 fps. Gold Medal CenterStrike ammunition is also available in 168-grain and 175-grain .308 Win. and 140-grain 6.5 Creedmoor loads. MSRP: \$37.99-\$47.99. www.federalpremium.com



XS SIGHTS STANDARD DOT VENT RIB SHOTGUN BEAD

Available with a green or orange photoluminescent Ember Glow Dot, the new XS Sights Shotgun Bead for waterfowl and turkey hunting is brighter than similar-sized fiber-optic sights in daylight conditions and glows in low light for enhanced visibility. They are ideal for use at dawn and dusk and when hunting in areas with thick overhead vegetation or in blinds on foggy mornings. These sight replacement beads have no magnets, which are easily lost, and require no custom work by a gunsmith. Installation is simple and the illumination helps hunters and clay shooters get on target quickly and accurately. The universal fit design utilizes a brass post and friction taper lock that securely holds the bead in place. MSRP: \$54.99. www.xssights.com



BALLISTOL SUPPRESSOR CLEANER

Narrow sections on fins and small holes improve the performance of suppressors, but they make cleaning these devices more difficult if they cannot be dismantled. No problem. Self-cleaning, odorless and gentle on materials, Ballistol Suppressor Cleaner dissolves and neutralizes combustion residues with no disassembly required. Simply close the suppressor on one side with the included rubber stopper and fill it completely, leaving the cleaner in the suppressor for at least two hours. If the suppressor cannot be closed due to its design, it can be immersed in the cleaner. Ballistol Suppressor Cleaner is also suitable for dismountable silencers and for use in a sonic cleaner. MSRP: \$40/Two 16-ounce bottles and one pack of stoppers. www.ballistol.com

RGD RANGE, AMMO & BLIND BAG

RGD's Range, Ammo & Blind Bag is constructed from 500D PVC with double-stitched seams, providing a waterproof exterior shell and features rubber flap-covered zippers on the top opening and side pockets. It features compartmentalized interior storage with two adjustable hook-and-loop dividers and two exterior pockets with inner zippered mesh pockets and elastic straps for organizing small gear. Exterior elastic bands and MOLLE straps provide additional secure storage. The main compartment facilitates larger items such as handguns, hunting gear and ammo, and the bag comes with a removable shoulder strap, nylon grab handle and integrated rubber feet. It is available in Green and Tan and comes with a one-year unconditional warranty. MSRP: \$104.99. www.rugidgear.com



HOWA 7MM PRC CARBON STALKER RIFLE

The Howa Carbon Stalker is now available in the powerful 7mm PRC chambering — fitted into a custom carbon fiber wrapped stock that brings the weight of this rifle down to 6 pounds, 12 ounces in long-action chamberings. The 7mm PRC Carbon Stalker is a great fit for a wide variety of big-game hunting applications — providing exceptional accuracy at a value price. It comes with a threaded barrel and is available with Black and Kryptek Altitude finishes in right-handed models only. The 7mm PRC chambering is also available in Howa's HS Precision and Gamepro rifles. MSRP: Starting at \$969. www.legacysports.com



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NEW PRODUCTS



COLT CBX TAC HUNTER RIFLE

The Colt CBX Tac Hunter Bolt-Action Hunting Rifle offers the precision and ergonomics of a competition rifle in a lightweight, field-ready platform — available in .308 Win. and 6.5 Creedmoor chamberings, featuring 20- and 22-inch sporter-profile barrels, respectively. Muzzles are threaded for attaching aftermarket accessories and equipped with a thread protector. The smooth bolt-action mechanism features a 60-degree bolt throw for faster cycling and the user-adjustable (2.5 to 5 pounds) trigger provides a customized trigger pull. A two-position tang safety ensures quick operation while preventing potential accidents, and length of pull can be adjusted from 12.75 to 14.25 inches using the three included spacers. The rifle also includes an ambidextrous mag release and a five-round AICS magazine. MSRP: \$999. www.colt.com



DEAD RINGER SUPER FREAK EXTREME MECHANICAL BROADHEAD

The Super Freak Extreme Mechanical Broadhead from Dead Ringer is built to pair with today's high kinetic energy bows and create devastating wound channels for short tracking jobs. It is constructed with two razor-sharp, stainless-steel blades and an aluminum ferrule with a front-deploy design for a .75-inch cut on impact and 2.75-inch exit wound that leaves massive blood trails. Engineered to reliably perform at up to 450 fps, the 100-grain Super Freak Extreme boasts maximum penetration and field-tip accuracy, designed for use with high-velocity vertical bows and crossbows. MSRP: \$44.99/Three-pack.

www.deadringerhunting.com

SAVAGE ARMS KLYM CENTERFIRE BIG-GAME RIFLES

KLYM Centerfire Big-Game Rifles from Savage feature exclusive partnerships with Proof Research and Fine Ballistic Tools (FBT), and include the proven 110 and Impulse platforms. Each KLYM rifle features an exclusive carbon fiber wrapped, steel cut and 5/8x24 threaded barrel from Proof Research and FBT custom carbon fiber stock. The stocks include one-button adjustable comb height, two sling studs and a Magnaswitch system installed. The 110 KLYM options also include a user-adjustable 1.5- to 4-pound AccuTrigger, tang safety, blue-printed action, drilled and tapped receiver and a one-piece Picatinny scope rail. The Impulse KLYM continues to expand Savage's American-made lightning-fast straight-pull action platform. MSRP: \$2,699/110 KLYM; \$3,299/Impulse KLYM. www.savagearms.com



ROGUE RIDGE RF750 E-BIKE

Featuring a 750-watt motor and 13-amp hour battery, the RF750 E-Bike from Rogue Ridge stands up to long rides, with enough power to blast up the steepest hillsides. It can reach up to 20 mph with five different power levels of assist, has a range of up to 35 miles and a charge time of just 2.5 hours. With a folding 6061 aluminum hardtail frame, it tips the scales at 75 pounds and is load-rated for 300 pounds. The RF750 comes off-road ready with a rear pannier rack, front basket, 48v 2a charger, mud fenders, 80 lux headlight and tire liners. It is available in four solid colors and Mossy Oak Bottomland camo. MSRP: \$3,499.99-\$3,599.99. www.rogueridge.com

HEVI-SHOT AMMUNITION .410-BORE HEVI-XII WATERFOWL LOADS

Hevi-Shot has added two new .410-bore product line additions to its Hevi-XII Waterfowl Shotgun shell lineup. The new load options include a .5-ounce, 3-inch offering in shot sizes No. 5 and No. 7, with a muzzle velocity of 1,250 fps. Hevi-XII is the original 12g/cc density, tungsten alloy recipe from Hevi-Shot with pellets that hit harder from a longer distance and is 53.8 percent denser than steel — doubling the downrange energy. Shooters can drop three shot sizes for the same lethality and 28 percent more devastating pellets on target. Hevi-XII Waterfowl shotshells are loaded in Sweet Home, Oregon. MSRP: \$99.99/Box of 25. www.hevishot.com



X-VISION OPTICS BEYOND THERMAL BINOCULARS

X-Vision Optics has expanded its lineup of thermal scopes, sights and monoculars with the introduction of the Beyond Series Thermal Binoculars — designed to take nighttime predator and hog hunting to the next level. At the heart of the Beyond series is the TB300.

This lightweight 2-16X thermal bino features extraordinary magnification and high-resolution imaging with its 640x480 sensor, ensuring crisp, detailed visuals under all conditions. Plus, with 1,500-yard detection and 500-yard recognition ranges, spotting and identifying game has never been faster and easier. And with the built-in rangefinder, hunters can quickly get on target. The Beyond thermal binocular lineup also includes the TB200, offering the same advanced technology and performance with 3.3-12.8X magnification. MSRP: \$6,999/TB300; \$5,499/TB200. www.xvisionoptics.com





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The Future of MSRs and Hunting

Are modern sporting rifles as popular for hunting as it seems?

BY BOB ROBB

The ownership and use of the Modern Sporting Rifle (MSR) — often referred to by gun grabbers and the uninformed as an “assault rifle” — has been growing like weeds in recent years. In our world, this is common knowledge. The availability of MSRs in a wide variety of calibers suitable for hunting both big and small game, the improvements in manufacturing that has created very accurate rifles, and their usefulness both in the field and for self-defense, among many other reasons, has made them extremely attractive to a wide swath of the hunting and shooting public.

The primary argument against MSR ownership by an uninformed general public has always been that civilians don't have any need for “weapons of war,” and who needs a semiautomatic military-style rifle with 20-shot clip to hunt deer? Their misinterpretation of the Second Amendment and foolishness of such arguments notwithstanding, I have been wondering just how popular MSRs really are with the hunting public. Is their use growing? Are they more popular than traditional bolt-action rifles? What is their primary attraction for hunting?

A 2022 survey entitled “Proliferation of Hunting With AR-Platform/Modern Sporting Rifles,” conducted by Responsive Management for the Outdoor Stewards of Conservation Foundation, sheds some light on the topic. You can view the entire survey

at, www.outdoorstewards.org, but in a nutshell, here are some of its key findings.

At the top of the list, the analyses of data from this study in context with other studies released by Responsive Management and the National Shooting Sports Foundation suggests that 41% of hunters have used an AR-platform/Modern Sporting Rifle for hunting at some time, up from 27% in 2014. Overall, today traditional (bolt-action) rifles are used by 49% of hunters, with shotguns next at 26%, and MSRs sitting at 17%. When asked what types of firearms they primarily hunt with if not a MSR, respondents answered traditional rifles (76%) and shotguns (75%). Interestingly, only 4% said they hunt with a muzzleloader, and just 2% hunt with a handgun.

The trendline, however, is skewing toward more people using MSRs for hunting. This is reflected by the fact that survey respondents showed that fully 80% of those who have hunted with an MSR have done so for 10 years or less — and 57% of those have done so for five years or less. The numbers breakdown between use in 2014 and 2023 is: five years or less, 48-57%; 6-10 years, 18-23%; over 10 years, 31-19%. When it comes to what types of game are hunted with a MSR, in 2023, 81% said large game, like deer or elk, and 31% said small game. Back in 2014, respondents said 57% hunted large game, and 31% small game.

Ease of shooting (36%) and accuracy (31%) are the top reasons that hunters responding to the survey gave for using MSRs for hunting, with reliability (17%) and light weight (11%) also given as reasons for MSR use. In 2014, only 19% said ease of shooting was their primary reason for MSR use, with 28% listing accuracy and 20% listing reliability as their main reasons. Also, just over half the hunters surveyed (51%) said they were very likely (23%) or somewhat likely (28%) to hunt with a MSR, if it were legal to do so in their state.

In terms of demographics, traditional rifles are prevalent among older, established hunters and hunters who reside in a rural area, with 62% of these respondents having hunted more than 25 years, are 45 years of age or older (57%) or 35-44 years of age (53%), and 55% living in a rural area. An interesting finding is that, when it comes to hunting varmints like coyotes or wild hogs, a higher percentage of minority hunters (black or African American, 55%) and Hispanic-Latino (48%) have used a MSR than white/Caucasian hunters (47%).

There's more in the survey, and it's worth your time to check it out. What it says to me is that the MSR has been increasingly being accepted by the general hunting public as a viable, effective, and legitimate tool for hunting both large and small game. In my own experience traveling the country hunting every year, as well

as hanging with groups of serious shooters who demand uncompromising reliability and accuracy, the MSR platform has become a rifle whose popularity is growing. The ability to easily customize MSRs, add a suppressor to a short barrel that doesn't make the rifle long and unwieldy, chamber it for one of the latest short-action and highly-accurate cartridges that are growing in popularity as well as more traditional .223 Rem. and .308 Win., and top it with a top-of-the-line riflescope with turret system that produces pinpoint accuracy at long range, all while keeping the overall package weight reasonable, is highly attractive. And when not set up for hunting, simply replacing the upper with one built for home defense is a practical way to get more bang for your buck.

No doubt about it, the MSR as a hunting rifle is here to stay. I enjoy hunting with one from time to time, and will continue to do so in the coming years. Will it replace the traditional bolt-action rifle? Not in the near term, to be sure, simply because there are so many bolt-action hunting rifles in use today, and because a very accurate bolt gun can be purchased for less money than a quality MSR.

What's your take? Are your customers fans of hunting with MSRs? Is their use increasing in your area? Drop me a note at editor@grand-viewoutdoors.com and let me know. I'd love to hear your thoughts. **HR**





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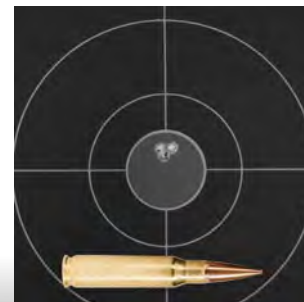
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