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CONTENTS



28

FEATURES

20 SHOT Show Survival Guide

Headed to SHOT Show this year? Here's how to maximize your experience and make the most of your time in Vegas.
By Ace Luciano

24 Top 10 Pointers for an Effective Marketing Plan

Marketing doesn't have to be a big, expensive endeavor if you do it properly.
By Michael D. Faw

28 Seasons of the Slug Gun

Slug guns have become specialty items with better accuracy and range than ever.
By Michael D. Faw

36 The Archery Business Pavilion at SHOT Show

The Archery Business Pavilion was a new part of SHOT Show in 2024, and it will be bigger and better in 2025.

38 Should You Carry Food Plot Products?

There's a specific segment of the hunting population you can cater to — small-time food plotters who don't buy enough to patronize feed and seed stores.
By Mark Olis

44 Torture Test: Hunting Boots



Lace-up boots are popular with hunters — but just how much abuse can these top-selling models take?
By Alan Clemons

48 Muzzleloaders: Stocking the Classics

Blackpowder rifles still sell, and these models are sure to please.
By Kat Ainsworth Stevens

52 NSSF: The Academic-Research-Media Complex Strikes Again

The studies that "experts" cite when claiming that hunters are poisoning eagles are always flawed and misinterpreted. That's no accident.
By Salam Fatohi

DEPARTMENTS

6 In the News

A roundup of industry updates

8 Informed Associate

How to Identify the Leader Among Your Crew
By Ken Wysocky

10 Up Close

Three Hunting Tripods
By Mark Chesnut

12 Gear Guru

12 Predator Calls to Lure in More Sales
By Kevin Reese

16 Range Report

Breda B3.5SM Black Waterfowl
By Guy Sagi

54 New Products

A selection of must-see products you should be stocking
By Gordy Krahn

56 Gear Roundup

Cold-Weather Hunting Apparel
By Gordy Krahn

60 Counter Culture: A Dangerous Trend

Are you paying attention to who's managing wildlife in your state?
By Bob Robb





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Do All Outdoors Announces Partnership with Safari Club International, Texas Trophy Hunters Association to Promote Hunting Conservation and Second Amendment Advocacy

Nashville, TN – Do All Outdoors, a leading innovator in outdoor shooting and hunting gear, is proud to reaffirm our strong partnership with two highly respected organizations in the hunting and conservation community: Safari Club International (SCI) and the Texas Trophy Hunters Association (TTHA). Together, we are committed to defending wildlife conservation, preserving hunting traditions, and ensuring that the Second Amendment remains protected for future generations of outdoor enthusiasts.

This partnership reflects our shared values and goals to protect not only hunters' rights but also the ecosystems and wildlife that depend on ethical and sustainable hunting practices. SCI's commitment to ethical hunting mirrors our own philosophy: hunting is not just a sport—it's an act of stewardship and responsibility. "SCI is thrilled about this partnership with Do All Outdoors, which will help all of our organizations to inspire future generations of hunters to engage in responsible hunting practices, instill respect for wildlife, and contribute to habitat conservation efforts," said **SCI CEO W. Laird Hamberlin**.

"We are proud to announce this partnership with SCI and TTHA, which will only enhance our ability to advocate for existential issues like Americans' Second Amendment rights, land access, and other regulations that impact hunters nationwide, said **Do All Outdoors CEO Dave Peterson**. "SCI's "Hunters' Embassy" in Washington, DC, allows us to take a stronger stance as part of their wide-ranging, pro-hunting lobbying and advocacy operations, while TTHA's longstanding promo-

tion of Texas' hunting heritage cements our mutual focus on education, conservation, and ethical hunting practices."

At Do All Outdoors, we believe that responsible hunters are conservationists, and working with SCI and TTHA ensures that we are at the forefront of advocacy efforts to safeguard the future of hunting for everyone. Through SCI's acquisition of TTHA, we've been able to strengthen our reach beyond Texas, connecting with more members nationwide. "TTHA is honored to work hand-in-hand with Do All Outdoors and SCI, leveraging our collective influence to support both hunters and the environment," said **TTHA CEO Christina Pittman**.

About Do All Outdoors

Founded with the mission to enhance the shooting experience for outdoor enthusiasts, Do All Outdoors provides a wide range of shooting and hunting products that are built with quality, innovation, and affordability in mind. Our products are designed for hunters, marksmen, and outdoor enthusiasts who demand reliability and performance in the field. We're excited to launch a new SCI Edition Trap, exclusively available at the SCI Convention in Nashville, Jan 22nd-25th, with a portion of the proceeds donated back to SCI.

For more information, please visit: www.DoAllOutdoors.com, SafariClub.org, and TTHA.com.

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Sellmark Appoints New Global VP of Marketing

Sellmark Corporation, a global force in the outdoor optics and accessories market, announces the appointment of Vanessa McCoy as its new Global Vice President of Marketing, assuming leadership of five of the company's seven brands: Sightmark, Firefield, KJI, BulletSafe and INFORCE. Vanessa joins Sellmark with a career spanning over 20 years, where she has crafted transformative marketing strategies and elevated brands in competitive global markets across Europe, the UAE, and the U.S. Her unique blend of expertise in branding, digital innovation, and cross-market storytelling promises to take Sellmark to new heights as the company strengthens its global footprint.

Vanessa's collaborative leadership style and passion for innovation perfectly align with Sellmark's mission to create meaningful experiences and connections for customers worldwide. "We are thrilled to welcome Van-



essa McCoy to the Sellmark team," said James Sellers, CEO of Sellmark Corporation. "Her expertise in building brand presence and engaging audiences across international markets will play a pivotal role in our journey toward continued global growth. Vanessa's innovative mindset and proven track record are exactly what Sellmark needs to navigate the evolving

landscape of the firearms optics and consumer package goods industry. Her vision aligns with our commitment to delivering exceptional value and experiences to our customers and partners worldwide."

Vanessa shares her enthusiasm for joining Sellmark, saying, "I am thrilled to join the Sellmark family! I look forward to creating powerful storytelling and building meaningful connections where we can learn, grow, and achieve success together."

Pope and Young Welcomes Delta McKenzie as New Gold Level Partner

Pope and Young recently announced that Delta McKenzie is joining the organization as a GOLD Level Corporate Partner.

"Pope and Young has been at the forefront of bowhunting ethics and conservation long before it was popular," said Delta McKenzie President Al Perelli. "Their vision and efforts have had a tremendous impact on our ability to bowhunt in North America and around the world. We are honored to be associated with this world class organization and be able to support their work to help bow hunters everywhere."

"We are excited to be working with Delta McKenzie to further our mission of preserving, promoting,

and protecting our bowhunting heritage," said P&Y Executive Director Justin Spring. "Delta McKenzie has long been manufacturing some of the best targets available to bowhunters, and now with the technology offered in their X-Ray Series, there is a lot of room to help educate and help new hunters understand good shot placement on the animals they pursue."

The Pope and Young Corporate Partner Program is designed to help P&Y Preserve, Promote, and Protect the passion for bowhunting and ensure bowhunting opportunities for all. Collectively, P&Y has contributed over 1 million dollars to conservation and education programs across North America.



Outdoor Stewards of Conservation Foundation Announces "Donate A Deer" Program

The Outdoor Stewards of Conservation Foundation understands that not only are hunters primary funders of wildlife conservation, but they are also key to solving the hunger crisis in America. Hunters donate more than 64 million meals of healthy, free-range, sustainable game meat to feed the hungry each year. Unfortunately, with 34 million Americans facing food insecurity on a daily basis, more meat donations are needed. If you hunt,

and the opportunity presents itself, please consider taking an extra harvest to donate through the Outdoor Stewards of Conservation Foundation's "Donate A Deer" program.

You can learn more about the program, including where to find a meat donation center near you, at outdoorstewards.org/donateadeer.



Don't Miss the Archery Business Pavilion at SHOT Show 2025

The Archery Business Pavilion was a new — and successful — part of SHOT Show last year, and it promises to be even better in 2025.

In mid-February 2023, NSSF (National Shooting Sports Foundation) announced the creation of the Archery Business Pavilion, a new exhibit area for the archery industry at NSSF's annual SHOT Show. The Pavilion is an exciting collaboration between NSSF and Grand View Outdoors, a leading provider of outdoor content. (Hunting Retailer is part of the Grand View Outdoors family of brands.)

The 2025 SHOT Show will be held January 21-24, 2025.

The Pavilion, located in Caesars Forum, was a huge success in 2024, and it promises to be bigger and better in 2025. Be sure to stop by, and you can read more about it on page 32 of this issue.



Vista Outdoor Sells Ammo Segment

Vista Outdoor Inc. announced the completion of the sale of The Kinetic Group to Czechoslovak Group a.s. ("CSG") following receipt of stockholder approval at the company's special meeting of stockholders on November 25, 2024. Under the terms of the merger agreement for the CSG Transaction, Vista Outdoor stockholders will receive \$25.75 in cash and one share of Revelyst common stock for each share of Vista Outdoor common stock they hold.

"The completion of our sale of The Kinetic Group to CSG marks a significant milestone for our company and represents the successful culmination of our Board's tireless efforts and robust process to deliver maximum value for stockholders," said Michael Callahan, Chairman of the Vista Outdoor Board of Directors. "We are confident our leading ammunition brands will be well positioned under CSG's ownership given its expertise in supply chain management and ammunition manufacturing, along with its shared commitment to expanding U.S. manufacturing and supporting NATO and allied nations. We also believe the transaction will create new opportunities for our dedicated employees and position The Kinetic Group for future growth and success."

"We are pleased to complete the transaction with Vista Outdoor and look forward to welcoming The Kinetic Group's talented team to the CSG family," said Michal Strnad, CEO of CSG. "The Kinetic Group has a strong portfolio of leading ammunition brands, and we are confident our partnership will drive continued growth and innovation, as we deliver high quality ammunition products to customers and create long-term value together."

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How to Identify the Leader Among Your Crew



Follow the “status awareness” approach to learn the leadership abilities of everyone in your company.

BY KEN WYSOCKY

Few things will doom a project faster than poor leadership. Without a respected captain at the helm, teams can easily be riven by friction over decision-making authority, assignment of tasks and responsibilities, perceptions of who is or isn't pulling their weight and who gets credit for success — or blamed for failure.

But picking great team leaders can be a somewhat arbitrary and nebulous process — more art than science. Sure, managers can use metrics like

seniority, experience and levels of technical expertise as criteria, but none of those guarantee how effectively people work together as a team.

Worse yet, there's no litmus test or key personality traits that can help managers predict how people will collaborate and work together.

So how are managers supposed to divine who's a great leader and who's not? New research shows there actually is a key trait managers can home in on — something researchers call status intelligence.

“Status intelligence is the ability to look at social interactions and perceive them accurately,” says Gavin Kilduff, an associate professor of management and organizations at New York University's Leonard N. Stern School of Business. He participated in a study led by Siyu Yu, an assistant professor of management and organizational behavior at the Jones Graduate School of Business at Rice University.

“More specifically, it focuses on the extent to which people can detect sta-



tus hierarchy in groups — how much influence, esteem and respect each individual on a team commands,” he explains.

This includes observing positives, such as which employees team members look to for approval or listen to the most, and negatives, like which employees suggest ideas that are consistently passed over or who constantly interrupt colleagues, Kilduff says.

MEASURING STATUS

To determine status intelligence, Kilduff and his colleagues developed a 10-minute test. The first step involved bringing in groups of four people at a time to a lab and directing them to work on a business project. The groups were filmed while they worked and were not told how to act, so their behaviors were natural and organic, replete with interruptions and ego clashes.

At the end of each session, the team members were asked to grade their colleagues on things like how much respect and admiration they garnered from other team members and who exerted the most influence on processes.

Researchers then edited down the 45-minute videos into nine 1- to 2-minute long clips and showed them to a new set of workers. They each were asked to rate the meeting participants in the same way the actual participants graded each other, with an eye toward who they thought had the most status and influence, Kilduff says.

Researchers then compared the test-takers' answers to the actual test participants' answers. Those whose ratings best matched the participants' ratings probably will work well with others, Kilduff says.

“People who can accurately determine the status hierarchy of those teams are more likely to be



good team players,” he explains. “The better they can interpret what’s going on in those groups in terms of status hierarchies, the better they’ll be at working in groups.”

FINDING GREAT TEAM PLAYERS

The test is not commercially available, but it might be in the future. “We’d like to help make the workplace function a little more smoothly as a result of our research,” Kilduff says.

But absent such a test, there still are ways for managers to determine which employees will play well with each other. For example, they could perform a survey to determine

which employees are most respected and admired by their co-workers, then distribute that information as a guide for colleagues. This information could even be provided to new employees so they know which co-workers might be the best ones to network or mentor with, ask for advice or help them get good proposals green-lighted, Kilduff says.

“If you want to implement an idea, you want to pitch it to the people with enough say and influence to get it done,” Kilduff says.

WHO’S IN CHARGE?

It also helps to have open and explicit conversations that point out everyone’s relative strengths and areas

of expertise, as well as acknowledge that some individuals will exert more influence over certain decisions than others. This can help teams reduce potential for status conflict because everyone knows where they stand.

“It can be very beneficial to have an open conversation about a task at hand and discuss what each team member brings to the table in terms of task-relevant expertise,” he says. “This can clarify which employees could be influential in what domains and reduce disagreements about decision-making.

“If you don’t provide this kind of context, it’s easier for someone who speaks loudly and with great authority — but really isn’t a good team player — to become a leader.” Kilduff concedes this can be a tough conversation to have with employees. But if it’s handled carefully, with a focus on backgrounds and work experience, it can be successful. Wouldn’t it just be better and easier to let status hierarchies emerge organically? Not necessarily, he says, pointing out that the absence of any knowledge about status just creates more potential for status conflict.

RAISE STATUS AWARENESS

Of course, this approach runs counter to many current workplace dynamics where status is downplayed, if not outright eliminated through elimination of titles, for example. Kilduff points out that this is a recipe for poor team performance because it decreases everyone’s status intelligence.

“If organizations try to ignore status and say it’s bad and that no one should have it, it creates more confusion than good,” he explains, noting that it’s difficult for employees to pretend that an employee with decades of experience is on the same plane as a new employee. **HR**



Hunting Tripods

Help customers shoot from a steadier position with these three popular tripods.

BY MARK CHESNUT

When my first son was old enough to start deer hunting more than a quarter century ago, I made a rudimentary set of “shooting sticks” out of an old piece of 1x2 lumber I had left over from another project. I cut it in 2-foot lengths, laid them across each other about six inches down from the tops and used a wood screw to fasten them together. When he sat on the ground and spread them out, they made a perfect shooting bipod as long as the legs were spread the right distance apart for sitting, kneeling, etc.

We hauled those things with us all over the state of Oklahoma, and he shot several deer using the sticks for a rest. Later, I was introduced to more complex shooting sticks made of aluminum with extendable legs and a rubber V at the top. They were even better because of the adjustability, and we used them until we wore them out.

Not long ago, I had an opportunity at deer camp to use a top-quality Kopfjager tripod. Knowing it was pricey and seeing the lightweight carbon material in the legs, I was convinced it was overkill — that is until I actually used it. I killed two bucks off of it that year with a crossbow at distances I wouldn't shoot without a perfect rest. It was rock steady and made shooting easy. Just get the crossbow on target, lock in the adjustment points and squeeze the trigger.

I was formerly somewhat of a naysayer, but that season completely changed my mind about tripods. Now I won't head afield without one, whether toting a crossbow or rifle. The peace of mind I get knowing I have an extremely steady rest far makes up for the initial cash outlay I made to get my own hunting tripod.

Still, there are plenty of naysayers. Selling a shooting tripod to a hunter who doesn't think he needs one isn't an easy task. He might be accustomed to propping his gun against the side of a tree or on the shooting rail of a stand. But once most hunters have used a top-quality tripod, they never want to go without one again.



If a customer buys an inferior-quality tripod, however, he's likely to be disappointed. Some are heavy, shaky or hard to use. Let's first explore a few factors that are necessary to a great hunting tripod.

The weight of a tripod is an important factor, as many who have one that is too bulky choose to leave it at home. The newest models made of carbon fiber are super light while still being quite stable — another critical factor in tripod selection. If adjustments to the tripod are too difficult, hunters won't be able to utilize them to their best performance, so easy adjustment is another important consideration. Lastly, a carbon-fiber tripod is naturally quieter to transport, open and close than an aluminum model, along with being less shaky — a big advantage when taking a shot where pinpoint precision really matters. Carbon-fiber tripods do, however, come with a higher price tag that might not be palatable to some tripod shoppers.

Now, let's take a look at three top-quality tripods that if marketed correctly might just boost your bottom line.

BOG DEATHGRIP SHERPA BACKCOUNTRY

For those who want a carbon-fiber shooting tripod with not quite as high a price tag, BOG makes one that should fit their needs and their budget. BOG says this model provides “incredible versatility at a fraction of the price of the competition.”

Designed as a multi-functional tripod platform, the DeathGrip Sherpa weighs just over 4 pounds and utilizes a quick-change Arca-Swiss mount system, making it great for switching between glassing and shooting regardless of the terrain. The smooth ball head features 360 degrees of rotation and 180 degree of tilt.

This model also utilizes proprietary rubber feet with removable steel spikes for additional traction and twist-lock legs for quick, secure leg height adjustment. The proprietary DeathGrip clamping system allows for hands-free weapon securement, while the removable center post provides micro height adjustments. Along with the clamping system, an optics plate is included in the package.

The DeathGrip Sherpa Backcountry also features non-marring jaw insert to ensure a hunter's favorite



big-game rifle won't be scratched or scuffed. Maximum height is 55.75 inches, and minimum height is 24.25 inches. MSRP is \$399, and a padded carry case is included in the package.

KOPFJAGER K800 CARBON FIBER TRIPOD WITH REAPER GRIP

Kopfjager, while tricky to spell, is a big name in hunting tripods and makes some of the lightest, most stable models on the market. The company's carbon-fiber K800 certainly fits that description.

Made like a tank, the K800 still only weighs 2.5 pounds. The user-friendly offset grip features protective padding, and the reversible center column allows the tripod to fold up into a small, easily transportable package. The K800 also has a Smooth 360-degree pan, and the tilt range is 109 degrees (21 up and 87 down.)

Spec-wise, minimum operating height is 7.5 inches, with a maximum operating height of 65 inches. Maximum center column extension is 52.2 inches. Vice width adjusts from 1.57 to 2.78 inches, and the heavy-duty leg extensions are locked in place by the flip of a lever. Three-position angle locks allow the user to configure the tripod to their preferred angle, from low to off-hand. And boasting the ability to bear up to 20 pounds, it is as



PRIMOS TRIGGER STICK APEX

A leader in the design and manufacturing of game calls for a number of different species, Primos also produces

a number of other fine products for hunters. The Edge Carbon Fiber Tripod Shooting Stick is their top-of-the-line model with all the bells and whistles hunters need for taking a good, solid shot at game.

The Trigger Stick Apex's super-strong yet lightweight carbon-fiber wrapped aluminum legs deploy fast and adjust on the fly for even the trickiest terrain just by squeezing the adjustment trigger. The rock-solid Apex-Frame design allows quick adjustment and smooth panning to keep heavier rifles on-target from low sitting positions to nearly 6-foot-high standing positions.

Somewhat heavier than the Kopfjager, the 7-pound Apex is still plenty easy to tote over the mountains or through the woods. And the removable mounting plate makes switching from spotting scope to gun yoke quick and easy in the field. Folded height to the base plate is 32 inches, and maximum height is 62 inches.

The Apex includes a gun clamp and comes with a removable mounting plate. With an MSRP of \$499, this is a good hunting tripod for hunters wanting to stay under the \$500 threshold.



strong as many tripods weighing nearly twice as much.

Best of all, the K800 comes with the company's high-quality Reaper grip, which is extremely versatile. And for photographers, the unit has a camera thread adapter. MSRP is \$599. It can also be purchased without the grip for a lower price.

WRAPPING IT UP

In the end, there are a lot of good hunting tripods on the market offered by several different manufacturers. But for serious hunters looking for a top-quality unit, these three should be on the list to check out next time they visit their favorite gun or sporting goods retailer. **HR**



12 Predator Calls to Lure in More Sales

It's prime time for predator hunters right now, and these calls are sure to bring 'em in.

BY KEVIN REESE

According to World Population Review, nearly 16 million U.S. hunters purchased hunting licenses in 2023, a 3.6% uptick from 2022. At the same time, predator hunting continues to trend upward. This is a good sign, considering hunting's critical role in our North American model of conservation. Hunting predators like coyotes, bobcats, cougars, foxes and more not only assists in conservation of wildlife like whitetail deer, but it also helps ranchers protect livestock, and even, at least marginally, increases safety for pets as well as people. Most importantly, as predator hunting relates to retailers, the abundance of hunters and increase in predator hunting popularity means retail space definitely should be reserved to cater to these diehard, year-round hunters.

FREQ ULTRASONIC GAME CALL

Renowned American inventor Dean Kamen said it best: "Every once in a while, a new technology, an old problem, and a big idea turn into innovation." This ideology is foundational to the development of legendary predator hunter Gary Roberson's development of the FREQ Ultrasonic Game Call.

The patented FREQ Ultrasonic call is exactly that, a high-tech call addressing the age-old problem of luring in call-shy and over-called predators. Unlike any other on the market, the FREQ is an "ultrasonic, full-spectrum game call" with a combination of low- and high-frequency speakers. The FREQ includes more than 200 professionally recorded low-frequency and ultrasonic sounds, and includes the ability to download free call files in the future as they become available. www.FreqCalls.com



Of course, predator hunting isn't easy. Learning proper use of calls as well as strategies, navigating terrain and increasing overall hunting success are often equally yoked with choosing the right rifle (or bow), ammo, accessories and yes, hunting calls. More than simply social, territorial beings, they communicate regularly and enjoy easy meals, preying on distressed animals, as well as young wildlife, pets and livestock. In the wild, capitalizing on predator vocalizations as well as animal-in-distress calling often results in great hunting success and memories sure to last a lifetime. All said, however, gathering the right gear, especially calls, can be a daunting hunt itself. Consider this mixed bag of 12 electronic and mouth calls sure to lure in more sales.



FOXPRO SHOCKWAVE

An industry-leading predator call manufacturer with more than 30 years under its belt, FOXPRO continues to develop and offer the most robust e-caller systems on the market. A perfect example is the Shockwave, a call I have trusted personally for years with exceptional results.

The FOXPRO Shockwave includes a TX1000 transmitter that has 100 sounds with options for 900 more files (MP3, WAV and FXP formats) stored on 8GB of memory, as well as left and right horn and tweeter speakers. Additionally, the Shockwave can be powered by a rechargeable battery pack (available separately) as well as 10 AA batteries. The Shockwave features include three play modes (repeat, single, jukebox), and plugging in the optional Fox Jack 3 electronic decoy makes the Shockwave a complete audio-visual predator lure. www.GoFoxPro.com



ICOTEC OUTLAW+

ICOTec, another predator e-call manufacturer with whom I have amassed several years of successful hunts, created quite the industry buzz with the launch of the Outlaw+, a programmable predator e-call and decoy combination.

The tripod-mountable ICOTec Outlaw+ boasts more than 165 professional calls, including 15 from Predator University's Tony Tebbe; AD400 adjustable-speed visual decoy with two prey toppers; 100-yard Bluetooth range; 300-yard remote-control range; ability to play two sounds simultaneously and an oversized remote display. The Outlaw+ is compatible with WAV and AAF file formats, and the included 32GB SD is capable of storing up to 2,000 sounds. Additionally, the ICOTec Outlaw+ is compatible with the Animal Audio app, where users can download files from highly respected predator hunters and professional callers like JD Piatt. www.icotec.com



WESTERN RIVERS FRED EICHLER SIGNATURE SERIES CALL

When it comes to bang for your customers' bucks, Western Rivers' Fred Eichler Electronic Game Call is tough to beat. As the call's name implies, it was designed and developed through a collaboration with master predator hunter and outfitter Fred Eichler. Perhaps the most cost-conscious e-call in this roundup, the Fred Eichler Electronic Game Call certainly doesn't skimp on a robust call inventory, offering 80 pre-loaded sounds and 8GB of internal memory.

The Western Rivers Fred Eichler Electronic Game Call includes dual 4-inch reflex horn drivers with up to 120db output, two external speaker jacks, motor-sync connector and auxiliary output to control a motorized visual decoy, ability to play two sounds simultaneously, configurable call presets, random or sequential calling with time intervals, 2.8-inch LCD display and backlit, four-channel remote control with extended 300-yard transmission range.

www.Western-Rivers.com



LUCKY DUCK SUPER REVOLT

A true American Dream story, Lucky Duck launched with a single product in 1995 and nearly 30 years later has launched over 200 more, including the Lucky Duck Super Revolt Electronic Call. Over the past couple of years, the Lucky Duck Super Revolt has become my primary e-call go-to system, resulting in taking numerous coyotes through-out my North-Central Texas stomping grounds — I have become quite the fan.

The Lucky Duck Super Revolt Electronic Call is the leveled-up iteration of the company's incredibly popular Revolt e-caller. The Lucky Duck Super Revolt boasts 200 pre-loaded sounds with the ability to hold up to 1,800 more, ability to play two sounds simultaneously, silicone protective cover, rechargeable lithium-ion battery and charger, erratic-motion motorized decoy, remote-controlled rotary base for 360-degree sound distribution, 50W speaker with high-frequency tweeter, 30W amplifier with 140db level, tripod and a backlit LD3X remote control with 3.2-inch LCD display, 10 brightness levels, and wireless 100-yard control range.

www.LuckyDuck.com



CONVERGENT BULLET HP

Born of the desires of expert predator hunters Byron South and Stephen Skaggs, Convergent Hunting sought to deliver an e-call system different than any other electronic system on the market. The result is the Convergent Bullet HP. While the Bullet HP's design and profile are dramatically different — an upright conical design distributing sounds at 360 degrees — the call's interface also is unlike other professional game-call systems.

Much like a traditional Bluetooth speaker, the Bullet HP is controlled via the hunter's Android or iOS smartphone up to 300 yards away. The bullet HP delivers up to 10 hours of calling from a rechargeable lithium-ion battery and includes five sound categories: predator, hog, deer, crow and snow goose. The Convergent Bullet HP also includes decoy and ground spike. The Bluetooth call platform also includes one additional feature, doubling as a wireless speaker for your musical playlist once the hunt is over.

www.ConvergentHunting.com



ROCKY MOUNTAIN ATOMIC-13 PREDATOR CALL PACK

Addressing the predator-call elephant in the room, not everybody appreciates the simplicity of electronic calls. Some folks simply get more out of their hunts by producing their own sounds, and there is no better set of tools to accomplish that than the traditional calls produced and improved upon for hundreds of years. A great example of an affordable premium call kit is Rocky Mountain's ATOMIC-13. The ATOMIC-13 is a three-call predator pack comprised of the company's popular Big Raspy, Mean Raspy and Lil' Raspy calls.

Coming in a set of three aptly named call sizes, ATOMIC-13 predator calls are constructed of precision-machined, fluted aluminum bodies and rubber mouthpieces. Delivering three raspy yet different distressed-animal sounds, Rocky Mountain Hunting Calls suggest the ATOMIC-13 call set is best used during fall through winter months; however, my hunting experience suggests the calls can deliver great hunting success year-round.

www.BuglingBull.com



FOXPRO FURTAKER COMBO PACK

What could be better than a three-call pack offered by an industry-leading predator call company like FOXPRO that also covers the most critical elements of predator calling — predator vocalizations as well as distressed animal sounds?

The FOXPRO Furtaker Combo Pack includes three calls, Tantrum, 4K9 and Kamikaze. The Tantrum is a closed-reed call that produces jackrabbit, fawn and additional animal distress sounds. The 4K9 is an open-reed call perfect for producing coyote vocalizations as well as an array of distress sounds. The Kamikaze is a bite-call design purposed for varmint and bird distress sounds. The 4K9 and Kamikaze feature a raised ridge on the tone board to prevent freezing, and all calls include a soft, flexible bell for enhanced comfort while calling.



BURNHAM BROTHERS S-2 CLOSE RANGE

My experience with Gary Roberson and his predator call company, Burnham Brothers, came more than a decade ago as a Mossy Oak pro staff hunter spending time with Roberson in his booth, and more time with his calls in the field. While I have trusted a robust array of Burnham Brothers calls over many years, one of my favorite mouth calls remains the S-2 Close Range Call.

Designed for close-range calling (including hands-free) when stakes are at their highest, the S-2 has been the only call I have trusted for up-close-and-personal experiences for more than a decade. The S-2 Close Range Call produces exceptionally rich-in-tone, distressed fox pup, baby cottontail and small rodent sounds. Additional benefits of the S-2 Close Range Call include its low price point and compact pocket-size design. It's a call no predator hunter should leave behind!

www.BurnhamBrothers.com

PRIMOS THE THIRD DEGREE PREDATOR

Beginning as a child and making his first call at age 11, Will Primos launched Primos Hunting in the '70s. Nearly 50 years later, Primos Hunting, now owned by Vista Outdoor, continues building upon Will's passions for hunting and calling. As a result of his childhood passion and Vista's continued commitment to product development, Primos The Third Degree Predator Call has become one of the brand's most popular offerings.

The Third Degree Predator Call, developed through a collaboration with iconic predator hunter Randy Anderson, ranks among the brand's most popular predator calls. Constructed of a rich, wood body and plastic mouthpiece, The Third Degree provides rich, loud and raspy animal-in-distress sounds, perfect for luring predators in for what they think will be an easy meal. Finely tuned, predator hunters can employ The Third Degree all year long a long-range call just as easily as lower-volume lure at closer ranges. If your customers are hunting for a solid, reliable, great sounding distress call to add to their lanyard, The Third Degree should be a top consideration.

www.Primos.com



FLEXTONE COYOTE RAGE

An industry-leading call maker purposed in offering calls in virtually every niche of hunting, from waterfowling to big game, Flexitone has the ability to develop traditionally inspired calls that are anything but traditional or ordinary. Even so, the Flexitone calls are incredibly realistic and easy to use, and they incorporate elements of innovation, high-tech manufacturing and realism — and a predator call like Flexitone's Coyote Rage is a great example.

The Flexitone Coyote Rage is composed of a soft, flexible neck and tone bulb. The resulting coyote howling, yipping and barking sounds may mirror those of a premium, traditional, rigid-body call, however, Flexitone's patented soft-construction design also provides hunters with greater flexibility and control over inflection, tone and volume. It is definitely a call worthy of your retail shelf space and an easy-to-back recommendation for predator hunters at all experience levels.

www.FlexitoneGameCalls.com



PHELPS PCR1 FAWN-JACK

The benefits of acrylic calls include rigid durability, performance in virtually any weather condition, consistent sounds and easier long-range sound distribution. Of course, my experiences with acrylic mouth calls generally follow a pass or fail success rate — they either sound great and work or sound cheap and manufactured, delivering dismal results. That said, a favorite acrylic predator hunting call option I love recommending is Phelps Game Calls' Fawn-Jack model.

While the Phelps PCR1 Fawn-Jack isn't the prettiest call in this roundup, it has been an incredibly effective distress lure for countless predator hunters, and the Phelps name is one countless predator hunters know they can rely upon. The PCR1 Fawn-Jack Predator Call features a full acrylic body and mimics a rich bear cub in distress sound, perfect for use with bobcats, cougars and coyotes.

www.PhelpsGameCalls.com



www.sterlingammo.us



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Breda B3.5SM Black Waterfowl

This inertia-driven shotgun with deep Italian roots will appeal to today's serious waterfowlers.



BY GUY SAGI

Dozens of shotguns available today perform admirably in conditions encountered by the average waterfowler. Whether from a trusted domestic manufacturer, importer or a smaller brand, there's a lot to like on the market.

The field of qualifiers narrows significantly when Mother Nature unleashes her fury, however. Autoloaders slow — or worse — charging handles get slippery, loading is a painful chore and standard-size controls are hard to operate when wearing gloves.

Those capable of thriving through

those challenges are a special breed that defy age and don't require marketing hype. Customers may never harness the assets they provide, but shotguns designed to flourish in the extreme deliver the performance customers deserve in a rugged, long-lasting platform they'll take pride in for decades. It doesn't hurt when they mention they purchased it at your store, either.

INERTIA CONNECTION

The inertia-driven system of semi-automatic shotgun operation was introduced by Benelli Armi sometime

around 1967. In no short order, it became legendary for uncompromising reliability and performance in conditions that drive even intrepid meteorologists indoors. Instead of using a more complicated gas-operated principle, it harnesses Newton's first law of motion to minimize complexity. The fact that rechambering speed is enhanced is another bonus.

What isn't widely known is that Bruno Civolani, Italian gunsmith and firearm designer, invented the inertia-driven shotgun system. He fine-tuned it through the late 1950s and, once satisfied with the results,

eagerly pitched it to some of his nation's foremost manufacturers in the 1960s. Beretta turned him down. So did Franchi and others.

He approached Benelli, an Italian motorcycle firm established in 1911. It was owned at the time by the Benelli brothers, and Civolani was likely relying on their passion for hunting, along with the fact that one of them designed an auto-loading shotgun in 1940.

The Benellis purchased the patent, but they recognized that manufacturing barrels and receivers isn't the same as two-wheeled racers. So, it entered





↑ Features include checkering at the wrist and forend, Soft Touch finish on the stock, textured magazine cap with sling mount, Cervellati closed-cell high-density foam recoil pad, and carrier release on the right side of the trigger guard.

into an agreement with Breda. Founded by Ernesto Breda in 1886, the firm was widely acknowledged for its engineering prowess and military guns. On the heels of World War II — 1947 in fact — it introduced the Model 1001 and began exporting firearms to the United States.

Benelli Armi Spa was formed in 1967, and the new ventures collaboration with Breda began not long after. That year, Breda stopped exporting civilian guns stateside.

Meanwhile, Japanese imports were taking a toll on motorcycle sales in Europe, so the Benelli family began slowly selling shares of the company to help finance the motorcycle business. Then, in 1983, Breda and Beretta acquired controlling interest in the company. This milestone led to further innovation and rapid expansion of the shotgun business, as Benelli Armi began leveraging the manufacturing power of Breda and the vast distribution network of Beretta in a period that saw the introduction of wildly successful new models. Finally, around the year 2000, Breda sold its stake in Benelli Armi to Beretta, ending a partnership that had forever changed the hunting landscape and cemented the Civalani inertia system as the favorite among waterfowl hunters around the world.

In the end, Benelli of motorcycle fame was absorbed by a foreign conglomerate; Breda, however, continued manufacturing firearms, including inertia-driven shotguns, and OEM parts — primarily for the European market. Today it remains family owned.

In 2023 Breda began working with Easton, Maryland-based Banshee Brands — the importer of Retay shotguns since 2017 that services everything in-house in the U.S. In 2024, a partnership was formed, and Breda performance again became available to American sportsmen.

Specs

Breda B3.5SM Black Waterfowl

Operation: Semi-auto, inertia-driven

Chambering: 12 gauge (2 3/4 through 3 1/2), back-bored with optimized forcing cone

Receiver: 7075-T6 Leonardo SPA military-spec aluminum alloy, double anodized black

Weight: 7.05 pounds

Overall Length: 49 1/4 inches

Barrel: 28 inches proofed for steel shot, finished in black Cerakote

Magazine Capacity: Four 3-inch shotshells (magazine extensions available)

Trigger: 5 1/2 pound let-off weight

Sights: Fiber optic up front with full length hunting rib

Stock: Rilsan fiberglass-reinforced polymer with Soft Touch finish

Recoil Pad: Cervellati closed-cell high-density foam

Accessories: Five extended waterfowl choke tubes, choke key, two detachable sling swivels, two shims to adjust cant, hard-sided polymer case, manual

MSRP: \$2,100

One of the first of the models to hit the market is the Breda B3.5SM Black Waterfowl. It's been a hot seller for some time in Europe, where it's known as the Grizzly model. Most of its features will be familiar to fans of the early Super Black Eagles imported by Heckler & Koch in the 1990s.

Here are a few of the key details that will undoubtedly make it a top choice among serious waterfowlers here in the United States as well.

COMPACT

The B3.5SM Black Waterfowl breaks down quickly in two separate pieces for compact storage or travel. Assem-



bly is a headache-free breeze. Simply slide the upper receiver assembly (wearing the barrel) onto the lower (wearing the buttstock).

Ensure the bolt remains aligned and in its proper position while doing so, then mate the pair snugly. Thread on the magazine cap, hand tighten and you're ready to head afield.

The gun ships in a lockable, hard-sided polymer case with pre-formed interior slots to secure the disassembled shotgun, accessories and more. Foam on the lid side protects the gun during transportation.

SPEAKING OF STOCKS

This stock is much better than most I've met. It is constructed from Rilsan fiberglass-reinforced polymer, making it durable and lightweight. It also resists heat, abrasion and impact, all the features mandatory in a gun destined for Mother Nature's abuse.

It somehow manages to provide a solid grip, even on surfaces far from the generous amount of wrist and forend checkering. It's not sticky, but the Soft Touch finish has a confidence-building non-slip feel. "It feels a bit like holding rubber without the flexibility of rubber and retains the original rigidity of the furniture," Rus Hinkle, lead gunsmith at Banshee, explained. In testing, there was never a concern over losing a solid purchase on the gun, even when sending multiple 3 1/2-inch shotshells downrange in rapid succession.

As for comfort with those heavier loads, the Cervellati recoil pad soaked up energy like a sponge. It's made from a closed-cell, high-density foam that refuses to hang up on clothing during mounting, yet it remains reassuringly soft to the touch.

Then there's the soft cheekpiece. It's a nice touch, and the feel makes indexing for proper cheekweld fast and effortless.

BUSINESSLIKE LOOKS

The test shotgun arrived dressed for a cameo in the movie "Men in Black." The look is all business, with a Breda logo on the grip cap under the stock — also in black.

The model name, Breda logo and "Made in Italy" are seen on both sides of the receiver, but the letter's



←↑ The inertia-driven system in the Breda uses a bolt with a rotating locking head. The gun ships with a variety of accessories, including extended choke tubes, choke key, swing swivels and more.

aren't painfully huge. Other than serial numbers and a mention of inertia driven on the bolt, there's nothing else that stands out. There is, after all, no reason for a firearm to betray your position as a flight approaches.

It's more than cosmetics, though. The two-piece receiver is constructed from 7075-T6 mil-spec aluminum alloy, then double anodized in black.

Why a two-piece receiver? According to Hinkle, it's for, "Ease of disassembly, manufacturing and maintenance. Think of an AR-15's two-piece receiver, or a G3, FAL, STG.44, or even a Kalashnikov. Separation and precision fitment of the mechanical components allows for simpler overall manufacturing, less material waste and ease of maintenance. It is easier to field strip and service a firearm if everything is easy to access. This mentality of ease of assembly goes back to the original Breda model 1001 from 1947."

The oversize charging handle and bolt release make operation a pleasure when wearing gloves. The crossbolt safety is in the familiar, behind-the-trigger position.

BARREL AND FORCING CONE

The gun is designed for torture testing in nature, so the barrel, of course, gets a Cerakote finish. "Cerakote is currently the most resilient finish to the elements," according to Hinkle. "Hunters will be taking their firearms into the harshest conditions for a firearm: mud and saltwater. Cerakote has proven to stand up to these harsh conditions so long as proper care of the firearm is maintained."

The real secret sauce is inside, however.

It is manufactured with a deep-bore drilling process. According to Hinkle, that results in "a more homogenous barrel versus the hammer-forging process, allowing for superior patterning performance on a one-to-one comparison. Hammer forging does not result in a completely homogenous barrel, and the barrel's density is not uniform down the barrel.... We have customers consistently and repeatedly take turkeys out to 100 yards and further with properly optimized chokes and shells."

Add a factory back-bored cham-

ber and optimized forcing cone and there's little wonder Christian Handy, Banshee Chief Executive, describes the shotgun as, "...more of a hand-fit product, small-batch, not a mass-produced gun."

SIGHTS AND MORE

Up front there's a red fiber-optic tube, and a full-length hunter rib atop the barrel completes the sight picture. Grooves on the latter reduce glare when those early-morning flights arrive with the sun at their back. Then there's the five extended choke tubes that ship with the gun, sling swivels and more.

As for performance, the shotgun performed flawlessly. It chambered and cycled through 2 3/4-, 3- and 3 1/2-inch shotshells without a hiccup. Trigger let-off weight was consistent, and getting back on target was fast.

This gun's going to be popular among diehard waterfowlers. That fact makes it worth serious consideration by hunting retailers. **HR**



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SHOT Show Survival Guide

Headed to SHOT Show 2025? We've got your guide to maximizing your experience.

BY ACE LUCIANO

SHOT Show is more than just an industry event; it's the heart of the shooting, hunting and outdoor trade world. Every January, tens of thousands of professionals gather in Las Vegas to experience the latest gear, network with peers, and plan the year ahead. But SHOT Show has changed over the years, evolving into something more than just a place to write orders and close deals on the spot. Today, it's an essential opportunity for building relationships that lead to business down the road. The business world is constantly changing — and you need to change with it. If you're planning to attend SHOT Show 2025, here's a guide to help you make the most of the experience.



THE EVOLUTION OF SHOT

SHOT Show was once heavily focused on writing and taking orders directly at the show. While deals are still made and orders are placed, today's SHOT Show is more about building and strengthening relationships. Many manufacturers, retailers and dealers are using it as a platform to connect with both new and returning customers, setting the stage for orders to be finalized after the event. The shift has been driven by a more digital and connected marketplace. Today, companies can introduce products year-round via online channels, so the focus at SHOT Show is increasingly on



in-person networking, making connections with media professionals, and planning out the business year strategically. This evolution means that your time at the show is invaluable — not just for immediate sales but for future opportunities. There is also not another event in the world that allows you to gain as much media exposure in one place as SHOT Show week will.

Let's dive into how you can maximize your experience and get the most bang for your buck.



“While deals are still made and orders are placed, today’s SHOT Show is more about building and strengthening relationships.”



MAXIMIZE YOUR MEETINGS

With a vast show floor and thousands of exhibitors, SHOT Show can be overwhelming. To make the most of it, pre-planning is critical. One of the best ways to get value from the show is to set up meetings in advance. Identify the manufacturers, sales reps and outdoor media you want to meet with and schedule appointments ahead of time. A few tips:

Book meetings early: Big-name manufacturers often have packed schedules. The earlier you reach out, the better chance you have of securing a time slot.

Target new relationships: While maintaining relationships with current suppliers is crucial, don't forget to allocate time to meet with new vendors. This is the perfect place to discover new lines and innovative

products.

Connect with outdoor media: Thousands of media professionals attend SHOT Show every year, covering hunting gear, tactical accessories, the latest innovations in firearms, and more. Building relationships with the media can boost product visibility. Having a good press kit and product samples ready can turn a simple introduction into

many years of future media coverage. The media presence at SHOT Show is substantial, with representatives from all corners of the industry, from bloggers to major magazines and TV shows. A simple conversation could lead to coverage that reaches tens of thousands to MILLIONS of your potential customers. If you represent a manufacturer, do yourself a favor: Make it easy for people in the media to find, communicate, meet and interact with you, and make sure you treat every member of the media with a professional level of respect. The NSSF vets all media members admitted to the show. Today's small-audience blogger can and often is tomorrow's multi-million-follower influencer, editor, or “big-time” writer, and they'll likely remember who was easy to work with — and who was not.

PLAN WISELY

Your time at the SHOT Show moves fast, and without a solid game plan, you can quickly feel overwhelmed. To





ensure you get the most out of it, you need to plan your time wisely.

Send invitations and requests in advance: Email and physical invitations are a great way to stand out in an attendee's busy inbox. Start sending these at least a month before the show, inviting people to stop by your booth or to schedule a meeting.

Set up appointments: Know exactly who you need to meet, whether they're current partners or potential new contacts. Schedule specific times with these people so you don't get lost in the shuffle.

Make a booth-visit plan: If you're at the show as a buyer or have products to show to various manufacturers, you'll want to walk the show floor. Identify target exhibitors whose products align with your business goals, and plan to visit their booths during any downtime.

SHOT UNIVERSITY: TAILORED EDUCATION FOR YOUR BUSINESS

SHOT Show is not just about product discovery — it's also a place

to grow your knowledge. SHOT University offers attendees educational sessions designed to help them grow their business. The courses are presented a la carte, meaning you can choose the ones that best align with your interests and goals. From marketing strategies to managing compliance, SHOT University covers it all. Whether you're new to the industry or a seasoned veteran, there's always something to learn. The sessions often lead to conversations with other professionals in the same boat, often leading to new partnerships and friendships. With an array of topics to choose from, you can pick the sessions that will have the most direct impact on your business.

SUPPLIER'S SHOWCASE AND SHOT SHOW EXTRA

The Supplier's Showcase is where the magic behind the scenes happens. This two-day event is designed specifically for suppliers and manufacturers, showcasing the raw materials, technologies and services that go into making the latest gear. From inno-



vative coatings and precision parts to packaging solutions, attendees get a front-row seat to the future of product development. If you're in manufacturing or design, this is a can't-miss opportunity to network with top-tier suppliers, find cutting-edge solutions, and streamline your supply chain. It's not always about simply sourcing materials — it's often about discovering what might be possible that you didn't know.

MAKE A SPLASH

Highlighting your business with a big giveaway or necessary item can drive tremendous booth traffic. If you want proof of concept, take a lesson from these super-successful promotions.

Retro Rifle

For hours every day, the line for the Retro Rifle booth is over 100 people long, despite them being at almost the very back of the new Caesars Pavilion. The reason? Their special shirt giveaway. They get an additional benefit by having people wear these cool duds for the remainder of the show.

Springfield Armory and Century Arms

Every year at the end of the show, Springfield Armory and Century Arms have a huge giveaway that draws a crowd that blocks several aisles. Before each giveaway, a targeted promotional message is given about a featured or new product. The catch? You must be PRESENT to win.

Geissele Triggers

Attendees rush to Geissele Triggers as their very first stop in the show, not only for their high-quality products, but for almost everyone's most-coveted item: the best badge holders! Not only does this give great opportunity for customer interaction, but it puts their brand out to every corner of the event.

How can you have similar success? Plan now and you'll reap big brand rewards later.



The SHOT Show eXtra, with its unique focus on up-and-coming brands and specialized exhibitors who don't have floor space in the main halls, is also a can't-miss. This area gives attendees a chance to uncover hidden gems, new products, and niche solutions that might not be on anyone's radar yet. Whether you're a retailer looking for the next big thing or just someone who loves discovering innovative gear and products, SHOT Show eXtra is worth spending the time.



is more than just business transactions and deal-making. It's a community event where you can meet up with old friends, discover the latest innovations, and simply enjoy being part of an industry that we all love. Sure, the business side of it is essential — after all, it's how many companies plan their product lines and strategies for the upcoming year. But what brings everyone back year after year is the shared passion for shooting, hunting and the great outdoors. Walking the show floor, discovering exciting new products, and catching up with familiar faces makes SHOT Show an experience that keeps attendees coming back for more. Yes, the industry has its challenges, from regulatory hurdles to evolving consumer habits, but the sense of camaraderie and shared passion is what drives us forward. At SHOT Show 2025, you'll feel that excitement, whether it's from seeing the latest innovations or just sharing stories with others in the industry.



Planning for SHOT Show 2025 can seem like a big task, but with the right preparation, it's an opportunity to build lasting relationships and drive future business. Whether you're setting up meetings with manufacturers, engaging media professionals, or soaking up the knowledge from SHOT University, each part of the experience offers something valuable. And of course, don't forget the networking events and social side of the show — it's as much about having fun as it is about the business. With a little pre-show planning, you'll be ready to make the most of your time at SHOT Show 2025, ensuring that your booth stands out, your schedule is packed, and you're making meaningful connections that will benefit your business long after the event ends. **HR**

THE RETURN OF THE ARCHERY BUSINESS PAVILION

After its success last year, the Archery Business Pavilion will be back for SHOT Show 2025. Archery is one of the fastest-growing segments in outdoor sports, and the pavilion is dedicated to products that support that growth. Whether you're an existing archery retailer or looking to expand your business into bowhunting gear, this pavilion is worth your time. Connecting with the exhibitors in this area can open new doors for

your business. From broadheads to bow sights, it's a one-stop-shop for practically anything archery-related.

NETWORKING EVENTS

Networking has always been a big part of SHOT Show, but 2024's events were so successful that they've become a permanent fixture of the program. The concert, happy hour, and professional networking events were a big hit, offering attendees a fun and relaxed atmosphere to connect. These events offer more than

just a good time. These structured events give you the chance to meet people you may not have had time to connect with during the day.

Happy hours and concerts: After a day of business, these informal settings are the perfect place to unwind while making new connections. Many deals begin with a friendly conversation over a drink.

WHY SHOT SHOW IS MORE THAN JUST BUSINESS

At the end of the day, SHOT Show





EMPLOYEES

No Firearms
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E
EASTON

BOW





Top 10 Pointers for an Effective Marketing Plan

Marketing doesn't have to be a big, expensive endeavor if you do it properly.

BY MICHAEL D. FAW

Marketing plans are critical for gaining attention for your store or shooting industry-related business, plus the wares and services you offer your customers. Marketing also covers doing market research and analyzing various advertising strategies. Your store probably doesn't have the budget for a full-time marketing specialist, but there's still a lot you can do. While marketing plans can range from elaborate to simple, the best plans are those that are easy to understand, easy to implement, and easy to follow through on.



1) Look Back, Look Ahead: Believe it not, every business is engaged in marketing just by opening the front doors. Beyond that, the efforts could be a social media page or ads placed in local newspapers or by sponsoring events. Look at what has been tried, what worked, and then make plans for what you want to do or try next. Often, looking back at what worked — or did not work — will help you in determining where to apply time and resources in the future.

2) Set Measurable Goals and Objectives: Deciding what to do and putting those ideas in writing helps you begin to determine what you want to gain through marketing, from more customers inside your business to moving certain inventory items — and ultimately both of those will yield more profits. Answer the question: What do I want to accomplish?

Write out the many parts of the marketing plan in an executive summary to help you and others better understand what needs to happen when, and what the overall outcome should be. Some common marketing plan goals could include: creating a brand identity for your business and building the brand awareness; increasing sales and ultimately increasing profits; developing brand loyalty and targeting or increasing your repeat customer base; targeting a new audience and pulling in new customers; launching new product lines or services; or expanding your business into new markets. As you can tell, there is a lot to consider.

3) Sources that Lead to Successes: In the data-gathering mode that will guide you in making some critical decisions, take note that the NSSF has market research on many customer groups, and numerous agencies in your state will also have data on hunters, types of hunters,



what they hunt, etc. Licenses, applications and draw results for residents (and nonresidents if you live somewhere like Iowa for white-tailed deer hunters or Colorado or Montana for elk hunters who travel there from out of state) will give you information on hunter numbers and their habits. Once you see the patterns, work to recognize the gear those customers need. Getting the information that leads to new ideas and better results could be easier than you think — and you don't have to be a numbers person.

4) Zero on Trends and Opportunities: Many items in the hunting gear category are trendy, and a large portion of the hunting population always focuses on “what’s new?” New bows, new rifles or shotguns, new boots, new treestands and safety gear, and the newest camouflage patterns are of great interest to hunters everywhere. They see and read about this new gear from SHOT Show reports,

websites, blogs, hunting magazine articles and ads and from other sources.

Aging hunters also means opportunities if you stock the right goods or offer the right services. Research indicates that as a hunting population ages, they may hunt much differently than they did 20 years past. This could mean fewer treestand sales and more ground blinds and camouflage hunting seats if your region is a retirement-rich neighborhood or if the state’s hunting population skews older. Also note the interest and growing efforts put into youth hunts and intro-to-hunting programs for adults by your state’s game department. Those programs could yield your newest customer base.

5) Know Thy Customers: You may know the names and faces of repeat customers, but you should strive to know more details about your customer base. Beyond their interests, are they hunting solo or with friends, is hunting a family af-

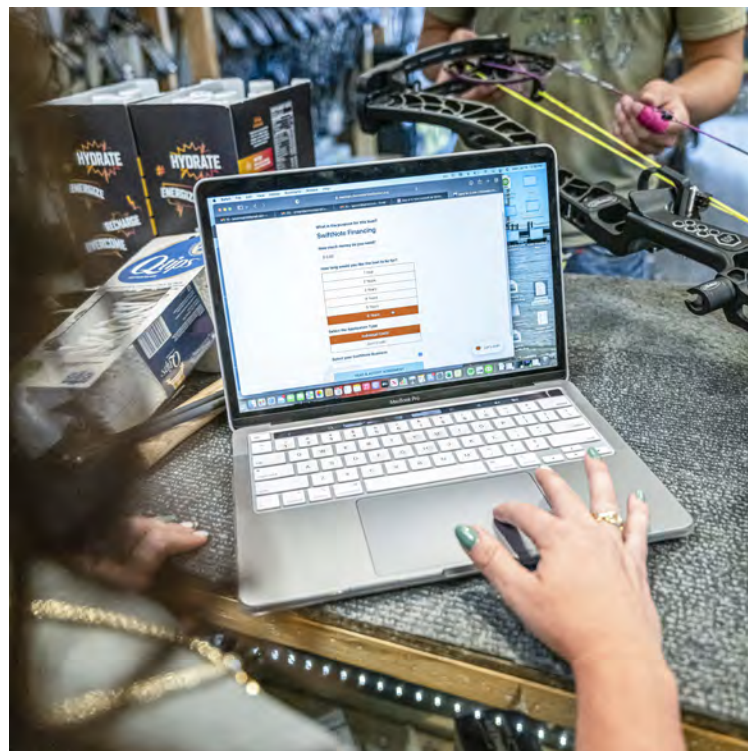


fair, and do they hold membership in certain hunting organizations with a focus on a species, like elk, turkeys or deer? The clothing and hats worn by some shoppers, and even the wallet or coffee cup they are holding, could provide clues for you about their species and hunting styles and interests. Those points are key marketing intel.

6) Develop a Brand: Often, the brand of your business can come from the lips of a customer in a statement. Listen closely for WOW statements, or statements like “I like coming in here because of X,” or “My friend told me about Y that you had in stock.” Over time, the perceived reason customers come through your doors and what they think/feel/enjoy/expect comes into focus through their words. This can help you develop a brand identity and set you apart from any competitors.

7) Develop Objectives: Objectives are things you wish to achieve through a marketing program. Don't focus on unspecified, vague or unrealistic objectives like getting rich this year, but on solid objectives like increasing sales by 20% or growing your business more in serving an identified market, like first-time hunters or waterfowl or turkey hunters.

8) Develop a Strategy: A strategy is the plan to answer how you will work to achieve the objective identified. You've worked through the gathering-information stages, and now it is time to put ideas, numbers, data and dollars into a plan. What message or branding program will you be focusing on, and what channels will you use to send that information to new and current customers? How much do you have budgeted for the



marketing program, and where will those dollars be spent? Answers to the key marketing questions can help you make key decisions.

9) Write a Marketing Plan: Putting ideas and goals into writing helps you see the many parts and how to connect the dots — and what to do in your marketing strategy. Most successful marketing plans push information and call attention through many channels. From Facebook and other social media, to websites and print ads, to printed flyers dropped into customers' bags, the more you call attention to your business and what it offers customers, the better the results. The answers to what, how, when, where and why will guide you in writing out your marketing plan.

10) Hands Reaching Out: Now that your goals are clear and you have plans, it's time to implement. One proven marketing method is to get out and promote your business in person. Whether attending local

sportsmen's shows, species-specific fundraisers and banquets, or volunteering at such events, as politicians and preachers say, “it's time to press the flesh.” Carry business cards, shake hands and make connections. Word-of-mouth advertising is powerful.

Now that you have gathered the information on customers, looked at trends and markets, and developed and implemented a marketing plan, it's time to evaluate. While it may take time before you can step back and evaluate results, key on results such as noting if a customer states they saw an item or information on your website, read about something in your store on a blog, or heard about a new rifle you stock from a hunting buddy. Those are the first clues your marketing ideas and developed plans are working.

The next best clue is when your cash register drawer opens more. Marketing plans can result in more money into your business. That's always a good thing — ka ching! **HR**



Seasons of the Slug Gun

Slug guns have become specialty items with better accuracy and range than ever. What are you stocking?

BY MICHAEL D. FAW

In years past, slug-shooting guns were nearly any shotgun your customers owned and used for deer hunting — they simply slid in some standard slug loads and went hunting. Then came specialty slug shotguns that permitted the installation of a scope and offered increased accuracy with rifled barrels. The big-game hunting world has never been the same.

Most improvements in slug shotguns also provide improved down-range accuracy. Couple these better designed shotguns with an enhanced recoil pad, improved trigger, camouflaged and/or synthetic stocks, sling swivels, and the ability to add a scope and other accessories to rails, and you have your customers' undivided attention. Note also that you should think beyond deer hunters, because slug shotguns are also popular for bear and wild boar hunting.

"One of my favorite guns for a spring bear hunt is a 20-gauge slug gun," states Linda Powell, a hunter with lots of global-level hunting experience and the Director of Media Relations for O.F. Mossberg & Sons. "A 20-gauge slug

gun provides plenty of knockdown power and manageable recoil. A 12-gauge is a great option as well, especially when loaded with Hornady's Reduced Recoil slugs.

"In most cases, particularly in the eastern U.S. and when hunting bears in wooded areas, slug guns, plus today's improved slugs, offer yardages out to 100 yards or more," continued Powell. Big slugs can also mean an easier chore when tracking game after a shot is taken.

Keep those pointers in mind when a customer arrives at your gun counter and asks about a slug shotgun. Be certain to discuss what game the customer will be hunting to better guide them through the many options.

THE SLUG GUNS CUSTOMERS HUNT FOR

Here are some slug shooting shotguns that will bring customers through your doors.





BROWNING MAXUS 2 RIFLED DEER

The Maxus II Rifled Deer is a 12-gauge autoloader with a precision-rifled barrel designed primarily for use with sabot-type slugs. This shotgun is chambered for 3-inch shotshells and utilizes the Power Drive Gas System as found in the popular Browning wingshooters' shotguns, with the benefits of reduced recoil, extreme reliability and blazing-fast follow-up-shot capabilities. The cantilever rail with Weaver-style slots atop the action makes optics mounting easy, and it holds zero for any installed

scope when the barrel is removed for cleaning. Top features include a 22-inch, thick-walled rifled slug barrel, tubular magazine, gold-plated trigger, and composite stock with vertical grip and over-molded gripping surfaces. Its stock is shim-adjustable for length of pull and cast. The Maxus II Rifled Deer shotgun weighs slightly more than 7 pounds and arrives with a choke-tube wrench. This slug gun is available in two camouflage patterns: Mossy Oak Bottomland and Ovix. MSRP is \$1,949.99, and full details are at www.browning.com.



LEGACY SPORTS INTERNATIONAL CITADEL BOSSHOG 2

The Citadel BOSSHOG 2 semi-auto 12-gauge provides a tough black synthetic stock with pistol grip and synthetic forend along with a 4+1 shotshell capacity. The pistol grip and forend have enhanced finger groove slots to aid with control and accuracy. This shotgun has a raised tactical blade front sight and ghost ring rear sight, installed Picatinny rail scope base atop the receiver and a smaller accessory rail on the

forend, and ventilated butt pad to reduce felt recoil. Three choke tubes are included. The shotgun utilizes a chrome-lined barrel and is 40.5 inches long overall. A similar 12-gauge (Version 1) available through Legacy Sports International does not have the pistol grip or rails. MSRP is \$380. Details are at www.legacysports.com.



MOSSBERG 500 COMBO FIELD / DEER SHOTGUN

Customers will like that there are five versions of this slug shotgun gun readily available, and all include two barrels in the box: a field barrel and a rifled slug barrel. The lead model in the 500 Combo Field/Deer shotgun is the 20-gauge pump-action offered with 24- and 26-inch blued barrels paired with wood stock and forend. The two barrels with this 500 Field/Deer Slug Gun include a field barrel with full-length rib on the barrel and brass bead sight at the tip, and a slug barrel with rear and front post sights installed. Users can enjoy a 5+1 shotshell capacity and sling attachment posts. MSRP is \$588.

Among the other options in this versatile Mossberg Model 500 Combo Field/Deer Slug Gun are the 12-gauge model, much like the above noted 20-gauge model, plus several models with synthetic stocks that have an adjustable comb, cantilever for scope installation and the popular two-barrel sets. For customers wanting camouflage, the 500 Combo Field/Deer shotgun is also offered with Mossy Oak Break-Up camouflage. It's available in 12- and 20-gauge versions with two barrels and has a MSRP of \$668. Additional details on these many models can be found at www.mossberg.com.





REMINGTON 870 SPS SUPERSLUG

This slide-action 12-gauge slug gun by Remington Arms is mostly wrapped in Kryptek Obskura Transitional camouflage and features five longitudinal flutes on the exterior of the extra-heavy barrel. Those distinct flutes help minimize weight and heat buildup while enhancing barrel rigidity. Inside the barrel are six Parabolic Ultragon rifling grooves with a 1:35-inch twist to optimize the slug's flight. Another feature to aid with accuracy is the ambidextrous ShurShot pistol-grip and synthetic stock, which includes rubber-

ized overmolding on the pistol grip and an extended forend to provide a more secure hold in adverse conditions. Other features include a SuperCell recoil pad, a drilled and tapped receiver along with a Weaver rail, and built-in sling swivel studs. The Remington 870 SPS SuperSlug has a 25 1/2-inch extra-heavy barrel that is pinned to the receiver for the utmost in shot-to-shot stability. This 7 7/8-pound slug gun accepts 2 3/4- and 3-inch 12-gauge slugs (four slug capacity) and has a 3-pound competition-style spring in the trigger assembly. Details are at www.remarms.com and the MSRP is \$850.



SAVAGE MODEL 212/220 SLUG

This 20-gauge bolt-action shotgun has a subdued black finish overall and includes the user-adjustable AccuTrigger system to make it more user friendly. To aid with accuracy, the shotgun uses a 22-inch heavy barrel that is button-rifled. It offers an oversized bolt handle and a tough synthetic stock for hunting with gloved hands and in inclement weather conditions. The receiver is drilled and tapped with a one-piece rail for scope mounting, and the AccuStock with AccuFit shim adjustment technology for

the forend and stock improves grip, length-of-pull and drop for a more comfortable fit. This slug gun is designed for 2 3/4- and 3-inch shotshells and has a two-shotshell capacity via a detachable magazine. The Model 212/220 is also offered in a lefthand model, as a 12-gauge, and three models are cloaked in Mossy Oak Break-Up Country camouflage. MSPR begins at \$719, and details are at www.savagearms.com.



WINCHESTER REPEATING ARMS SX4 CANTILEVER BUCK

This unique semi-auto 12-gauge shotgun offers a synthetic stock with improved ergonomics of a more comfortable rounder grip and textured gripping surfaces to give your customer's hands a sure and non-slip grip. Added to those features is the non-glare matte black finish that won't reveal a hunter to a big buck — or other big game animal. Additional features include a rifled 22-inch barrel optimized for accuracy when used with 2 3/4- or 3-inch sabots and slugs, Weaver®-style cantilever rail for scope mounting,

Truglo® fiber-optic front sight with an adjustable rear sight, ambidextrous cross-bolt safety that is reversible, and included length-of-pull spacers to make stock adjustments and achieve a perfect fit to the shooter's body dimensions. The lightweight aluminum alloy receiver and bolt have a matte black finish also. The advanced Inflex Technology recoil pad directs felt recoil down and away from the shooter's cheek. This slug gun weighs 7 pounds, 8 ounces and is offered in a similar 20-gauge version. MSRP of the 12-gauge is \$1,109.99, and details are at www.winchesterguns.com.





BENELLI SUPER BLACK EAGLE 3 (SB3)

While Benelli has discontinued the Super Black Eagle Rifled Slug Shotgun package, several models of the popular shotgun can be stocked, including the camouflaged turkey model complete with a pistol-gripped stock, and then offer your customers the rifled 12-gauge slug barrel as an accessory (still offered by Benelli). The many models of the SB3 shotgun features include: a 3 1/2-inch chamber; choices of matte black, Opifade or Mossy Oak camouflage patterns on the stock, forend and barrels; CombTech

and ComfortTech 3 advanced recoil system in the stock; and inertia-driven operating system for smooth and reliable cycling. Most SB3 shotgun models also include an oversized bolt handle and safety for easy use by gloved hands. MSRP on the shotgun begins at \$2,199, and the 12-gauge 24-inch rifled slug barrels begin at \$629. Full details are at www.benelliusa.com.

SHOTSHELLS

Along with advances in slug shooting shotguns are numerous slug shotshells that help deliver the needed knock-down energy and accuracy downrange. Some are capable of toppling elk at 200 yards, and various versions, gauges and velocities will help your customers make key decisions to match their hunting needs and the game being pursued.

FEDERAL TRUBALL 12-GAUGE RIFLED SLUGS

Federal's TruBall Rifled Slug 12-gauge is a 2 3/4-inch shotshell providing a 1-ounce hollow-point slug that is capable of groups as tight as 1.4 inches at 50 yards. The TruBall system incorporates a plastic ball between the wad and slug and promotes clean separation of the components after exiting the muzzle to ensure the best accuracy and increased downrange energy. Muzzle velocity for these low-recoil shotshells is 1,300 fps for the 438-grain slug. Retail price is \$8.99/box of five shotshells. A Deep Penetrator 12-gauge rifled slug providing 1,350 fps velocity and several similar 20-gauge shotshells are also available. More details are at www.federalpremium.com



HORNADY'S 12-GAUGE AMERICAN WHITETAIL 325-GRAIN SABOT SLUGS

These 325-grain InterLock hollow-point slugs provide premium downrange impact and are lethal out to 200 yards. The slug's serrated edge initiates rapid expansion upon impact, and the rigid polycarbonate sabot ensures accuracy. The sabot leaves the barrel at 1,825 fps, and at 200 yards, it still delivers more than 1,000 pounds of impact energy. Hornady offers eight versions of the American Whitetail slug to include several 20-gauge shotshells and a low-recoil slug load. A rifled slug for 12-gauge smooth-bore shotguns is also offered. MSRP is \$18.50 for five rounds of the 12-gauge American Hunter 325-grain sabot slugs. Full details are at www.hornady.com.

REMINGTON ACCUTIP 12-GAUGE SABOT SLUGS

Remington's new Power Port Tip is incorporated into the company's AccuTip Sabot Slugs and delivers advanced aerodynamics. The company says this ammo will consistently print tiny 100-yard groups and transfer tremendous knockdown force to the pursued game. These flat-shooting .45-caliber slugs (in the 20-gauge sabot slugs) and .58-cal-

iber slugs (12-gauge shotshells) produce gaping wound channels, and at distances from 5 yards out to 200 yards, they will yield perfect mushrooms while retaining more than 95% of the sabot's original weight. This slug is designed for rifled barrels only and is jacketed with high-strength cartridge brass. Four versions are available with sabot weights in 260 grains (20-gauge) and 385 grains (12-gauge versions). MSRP begins at \$25.99 for five sabot slugs, and full details are at www.remington.com.

WINCHESTER 12-GAUGE BRI RIFLED SLUG

These Super-X 3-inch rifled slugs zip along at 1,400 fps from the muzzle. The 1-ounce hollow-point slug is encased in a two-piece sabot to improve accuracy. The slugs are designed for use in both shotguns with rifled choke tubes or shotguns with fully rifled barrels. At 100 yards downrange, the slugs are moving at 1,007 fps and will deliver a 1,012 ft./lbs. energy impact. A similar 20-gauge sabot slug and several rifled slug versions are also available. MSRP is \$16.99 for five slugs, and full details can be obtained at www.winchester.com.



SCOPE UP AND LOOK OUT

Along with advances in shotgun designs and more models that are optics-ready from the factory are shotgun scopes to pair with the shotguns. These models could serve your customers' needs:

GPO Spectra 6X 1-6x24i: This 1-6X power scope offers iCONTROL microdot illumination built onto the standard G4 reticle. It is equipped with DoubleHD objective lens technology, PASSIONtrac turrets, and a G4i reticle. The advanced turrets provide a 0.36-inch adjustment at 100 yards (or 0.1 mrad), granting an impressive 144 inches of adjustment range. The scope is 11 inches long and utilizes 30mm tubes. Custom turrets are also available. It's covered by GPO's Spectacular Lifetime Warranty. MSRP is \$899, and full details are at www.gpo-usa.com.

Leupold VX-Freedom 1.5-6x20mm Pig Plex: This scope is 100% fog- and waterproof, utilizes a rear (second) focal plane and has a unique Pig Plex reticle designed with hog hunters in mind. The thicker side and lower post in the reticle are matched with a ring at the crosshairs and quick-aim adjustment bars below and beside the circle. The scope is 9.35 inches long and weighs 9.6 ounces. MSRP is \$299, and details are at www.leupold.com.

Sightmark's 1-6x24mm CRI Presidio Scope: This scope utilizes fully multi-coated optics and etched glass and a red illuminated reticle. The 30mm scope tube is matte black finished and crafted from aircraft-grade aluminum. The 10.48ths-inch-long scope



uses common CR2032 batteries to provide 150+ hours of life, is IP67 waterproof and dustproof, and is shockproof for drops up to 3 feet. This scope has an MSRP of \$299, and additional details are at www.sightmark.com.

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THE 2025 ARCHERY BUSINESS PAVILION

AT SHOT SHOW WELCOMES NEW EXHIBITORS

THE ARCHERY BUSINESS PAVILION WAS A NEW — AND SUCCESSFUL — PART OF SHOT SHOW LAST YEAR, AND IT PROMISES TO BE EVEN BETTER IN 2025.

BY ARCHERY BUSINESS STAFF

In mid-February 2023, the NSSF (National Shooting Sports Foundation) announced the creation of the Archery Business Pavilion, a new exhibit area for the archery and hunting industries at NSSF's annual SHOT Show. The Pavilion is an exciting collaboration between NSSF and Grand View Outdoors, a leading provider of outdoor content. (*Archery Business*, *Bowhunting World* and *Shooting Sports Retailer* magazines are part of the Grand View Outdoors family of brands.)

Fast-forward to January 2024 — and specifically the 46th SHOT Show, which set 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 in Las Vegas, Nevada, 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 — including the Archery Business Pavilion — eager to view new,

innovative products used for hunting, shooting and outdoor recreation.

"The energy on the SHOT Show floor in 2024 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."

2024 ARCHERY BUSINESS PAVILION TAKEAWAYS

The 2024 Archery Business Pavilion (located in Caesars Forum) featured exhibits from leading manufacturers and suppliers in the archery and hunting industries. The new area of the show provided a focused environment for archery and hunting retailers and industry professionals to explore the latest trends, products, and business opportunities in the archery and hunting sector. So, what was the feedback from 2024?

"I spent a good amount of my time

each day in the Archery Business Pavilion," said *Archery Business* Editor Dave Maas. "Of course, because I have 'skin the game,' I wanted the new space to be a success. I must say I was impressed. The NSSF team did an outstanding job of making it easy for Show goers to find the new Pavilion. The space was clearly marked on the SHOT Show overview map, and special lime-green carpet runways (think shortcut) across the floors of Levels 1 and 2 in the Venetian Expo (the two main exhibit spaces) helped direct traffic to the SHOT Bridge, the path to Caesars Forum and the Pavilion. NSSF even had Show workers standing with signs directing people to the SHOT Bridge and the Pavilion; nice!

"The Pavilion space itself was big and bright, in a word — outstanding. In my opinion, traffic in the Pavilion was good. Yes, it would take a bit to get busy in the mornings, but I attribute that to the fact the Pavilion and all other booths in Caesars Forum are a bit of a hike from the SHOT Show entrances."

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2025

The SHOT Show's Archery Business Pavilion continues to grow in its second year with a dozen new exhibitors joining their fellow archery and hunting companies.

Among the new exhibiting companies for 2025 are Arcus Hunting, Buck Blitz, Canyon Coolers, Koola Buck, National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP), New Century Products, T.R.U. Ball/AXCEL Archery, Viper Archery Products, and FL Outdoors, whose brands include Swhacker, C'Mere Deer, TAC Vanes and Steel Force Broadheads.

"Momentum continues to build in year two of the Archery Business Pavilion at SHOT Show, and we've seen the addition of significant exhibitors," said Grand View Outdoors President/Publisher Derrick Nawrocki. "This in addition to FeraDyne Outdoors, Summit Outdoors, and many others which are coming back, along with Moultrie Mobile, which is doubling the size of its Pavilion booth footprint."





"It is worth mentioning that many of the traditional and more modern firearms shop retailers, who are looking to expand their existing inventory with categories in the hunting, archery and general outdoor markets, are now able to see that segment in one area, which is one of the goals of this space — helping to make the SHOT Show as efficient and convenient as possible for buyers."

"We're pleased with the growth of the Archery Business Pavilion and the opportunity that it presents for exhibitors and nearly 5,000 buyers who have intent to purchase archery, bowhunting and hunting products," Dolnack said. "Since the 2022 SHOT Show, our post show surveys revealed that 24 percent of the retail buyers had an interest in the category as traditional firearm retailers look to expand their offerings."

ARCHERY BUSINESS PAVILION SPECIFICS

➤ It will be located within the upcoming SHOT Show in Las Vegas, Nevada, from Jan. 21 through Jan. 24, 2025. You'll find the Pavilion in Caesars Forum in the Academy Ballroom.

➤ Any manufacturer of outdoor, hunting and archery-related products can exhibit in the Pavilion.

➤ The Pavilion features 16,000 net square feet of exhibit space and enclosed archery lanes to demonstrate new products for prospective buyers in Caesars Forum.

➤ Exhibit space is limited; first come,

first served. Those who exhibit in 2025 will have first choice for space for 2026.

➤ The Archery Business team, including editors and key staff, will be in the Pavilion working on best ways to cover and promote companies that exhibit.

➤ Additional coverage about the Pavilion will appear in *SHOT Daily* during the show and within the pages of other B2B brands such as *Archery Business*, *Hunting Retailer* and *Shooting Sports Retailer*.

➤ SHOT Show attracts attendees from around the world, including buyers, media and other industry profession-

als. The 2025 show will cover more than 820,000 net square feet of exhibit space, featuring over 2,700 companies showcasing the latest in firearms, ammunition, hunting and shooting accessories, archery, outdoor apparel and much more.

BOOKING YOUR SPACE IN FUTURE YEARS

Visit www.SHOTShow.org/archery-floorplan to see the Archery Business Pavilion floor plan for 2025. If you're looking at a map of the entire SHOT Show space, the Archery Business Pavilion is located in the Caesars Forum

area showing SHOT Show University and meeting rooms.

Note: It's likely that by the time you read this article, it will be too late in the game for you to make the decision to join other companies in the Pavilion during SHOT Show 2025. That said, it's never too early to begin thinking about the future, and specifically SHOT Show 2026. Be sure to look for future content in this magazine about the Archery Business Pavilion, including feedback from those companies that attended in 2025. For more information on the Pavilion and SHOT Show, visit www.SHOTShow.org/archeryexhibit.





Should You Carry Food Plot Products?

Serious food plotters are buying in bulk from their local feed and seed stores. There is a specific segment of the hunting population that small retail shops can cater to, however.

BY MARK OLIS

Prior to the 1980s, a food plot was nearly unheard of. Now, it's hard to imagine hunting deer without them. Even as food plots became more common, most hunters didn't have the equipment or know-how to successfully plant one. Today, there's a lot more science and information about food plots for the laymen. YouTube channels like Dr. Grant Woods' "Growing Deer TV" have created hundreds of hours of incredible DIY videos on how to plant the perfect food plots. This hunting content and hunting shows in general have created a FOMO movement in the hunting culture where many hunters think they must have a food plot. However, throwing seeds on the ground and hoping for big bucks isn't going to work. There is a process for planting food plots, and if followed properly, it might draw and hold deer on a parcel of land.







FOOD PLOTS 101

Before you start selling food plot stuff, it's always best to have a base knowledge of what you're trying to provide to the customer. Planting food plots is like farming. A farmer ensures that a crop has everything it needs to maximize yield. Likewise, a food plot will be grazed on by deer, which means it must continue to produce forage to keep the deer coming back for more. The following are must-haves if a customer wants to actually attract deer.

Sunlight: Without sunlight, food plot plants can't photosynthesize and create sugars. The sugars are what deer are tasting and find palatable. Without these sugars, deer won't find a food plot worth hanging around. So, don't plant a plot in a covered-canopy forest.

Nutrients: Nitrogen, phosphorous

and potassium are the nutrients found in fertilizer. They represent the three numbers found on the bag. Nitrogen is responsible for the green plant growth. Phosphorous helps grow roots and cellular walls in plants. Potassium helps the plant move nutrients throughout its system and adds to better-tasting plants. Without these essential nutrients, expect thin, yellow-colored plots that not even crickets will eat.

Soil pH: This is often the most overlooked aspect of food plots. Many soils are acidic and require lime to raise the pH to an ideal level. No, I'm not talking about the citrus fruit that adorns a cocktail, I'm talking about crushed limestone. Limestone is neutral on the pH scale and will help neutralize acidic soil. Most food plot plants grow best in neutral soil with a pH of 6 to 7. When a food

plot is planted in acidic soil, the plants can't take up the full amount of fertilizer they need, resulting in poor-performing plots and money wasted on fertilizer that leeches through the soil.

WHO'S THE CUSTOMER?

There are usually two types of customers in this category: Those with the proper tools and those without. The customer with the proper tools has a tractor with implements like a set of discs, sprayer, seed and fertilizer spreader, etc. This customer is usually planting acres of ground and will likely shop at a local co-op or feed and seed store to buy in bulk. This leaves you catering to the customer without a tractor.

The customer without a tractor will go about food plots in several different ways. At the most basic

↑ Large food plots require the proper equipment, such as tractors and tractor implements. This customer is already buying seed and fertilizer in bulk from a local co-op or feed and seed store.

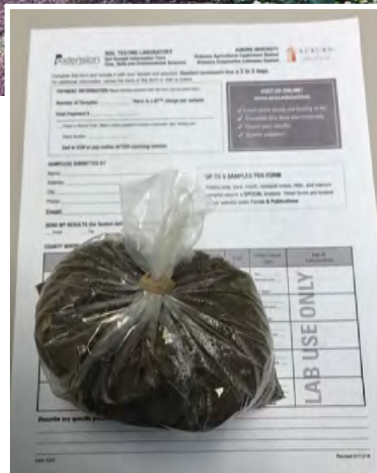
level, they will use hand tools to clear ground and plant a food plot. While this method won't yield much acreage, these hunters can establish small "kill plots." These plots can be created in between deer bedding cover and major feed destination points, such as large agricultural fields. Kill plots can be created with chainsaws and pruners to remove small trees and saplings and weed eaters and leaf blowers or rakes to clear leaves and grass.

The next step up in this customer group are the guys utilizing ATVs to help plant plots. This customer





↑ Small “kill plots” can be created with hand tools and will draw in deer. Customers without access to a tractor can create these ¼-acre-and-smaller plots. This is the ideal customer base to focus on for retail sales.



↑ When a customer walks in asking about food plots, always ask if they have done a soil test. This is a cheap procedure and will tell the customer the exact amount of fertilizer and lime their soil will need. A food plot is destined to fail without the proper soil amendments.

to ensure they are putting the right amount of fertilizer and lime in the ground to ensure a successful food plot. Whitetail Institute sells a soil test kit that makes it easy to do and understand for hunters. These can

can get more serious with the proper ATV implements, like smaller seed drills, discs, sprayers, and seed and fertilizer spreaders. A seed drill, which puts seed directly in the ground, can plant many acres, but these are expensive implements. An ATV disc can do a decent job turning over ground for smaller plots. The sprayers and seed spreaders can cover a lot of acreage. This group can get more serious about planting different types of seeds and planting more ground.

SOIL TEST KITS

Anyone who is serious about planting a food plot needs to test their soil

be purchased through Whitetail Institute and placed in the food plot section of your store. Customers simply follow the instructions on the kit and send off the sample to the specified lab and they’ll get the results back in a week or less.

HERBICIDES

Glyphosate (the active ingredient in Round-up) is typically used when prepping a fall food plot. Glyphosate is a non-selective herbicide, which means it kills both broadleaf and grass weeds. The first step is to mow tall grass and weeds during late

“There are two types of customers in this category: Those with the proper tools and those without.”



summer. Then, a week or two later, use a water solution with glyphosate to spray the freshly growing vegetation. This will kill the existing vegetation that would compete with your food plot seed. After two weeks, the existing vegetation will be dead and brown. At this point, it can be burned off or disced into the soil in preparation to spread the food plot seed.

Most herbicides also need a surfactant added to the mix to help it penetrate the plant’s leaves. There are numerous brands of these herbicides

↑ Non-selective and selective herbicides are commonly used in food plot prep and maintenance. Carrying small bottles with per-gallon-mixing instructions is ideal for the customer planting small food plots.

that you can find for retail. If you do decide to carry these, it’s best to get them in small packets or bottles where the customer can mix them per gallon of water for small plots. The most common method for applying these is with a hand pump sprayer or backpack sprayer for small plots. An



ATV sprayer can cover considerable acreage and typically has a 15- to 25-gallon capacity. For customers interested in growing clover-only food plots, Whitetail Institute sells grass- and broadleaf-specific herbicides in small bottles to kill weeds but not the clover.

THROW AND GROW

This is a common name for food plot blends that don't require a full-scale farming operation to plant. There are many brands out there selling a variety of throw-and-grow blends. A couple of the quality blends that I've used are Big Tine's Buck Brunch and Whitetail Institute's No-Plow. These blends have hardy, fast-growing seeds like clover, brassicas, radishes and forage wheat. These blends can easily be spread with a hand spreader and require the least amount of soil prep. A guy with a backpack sprayer and a rake can plant a quarter-acre plot that will attract deer during the fall hunting season.

Clover is another great option for deer; it will grow in the fall and through the spring and summer with plenty of soil moisture. Whitetail Institute is the king of clover with its Imperial Whitetail blend. They offer this variety in convenient bags that are ideal for small food plots. The small seed will readily grow in plots that don't need a tractor to prep.

ATV IMPLEMENTS

As mentioned earlier, a hunter can plant a lot of food plots with a larger

→ ATVs can be a huge asset to the DIY foodplotter. ATV sprayers and seed/fertilizer spreaders can plant a dozen acres per day. This might be a customer base worth catering to during spring and fall food plot planting seasons.



↑ Clover is a popular food plot crop and can be purchased in small-sized packages ideal for retail shelves. The small seeds are easily spread using a hand spreader and germinate quickly.

ATV (400cc engine or larger). Kunz Engineering sells discs, mowers, plows and cultipackers for ATV use. These are high-quality products that will get the job done, too.

An ATV sprayer is an important tool for spraying herbicides for food plot prep. Like most things in life, there are cheap ones and expensive ones. I've found the cheap ones break easily and typically require upgraded parts. For the past decade, I've used a CropCare 25-gallon sprayer with fold-up boom arms that will spray a 12-foot swath when booms are deployed. This thing is a beast and flat-out works. We plant roughly 10 acres of food plots each season, and I rely heavily on this model. They're not cheap, but will last.

There are also all-in-one planting tools for ATVs. Ranew Outdoors manufactures the Firminator. This attachment has the seed box, disc

"I recommend starting small. Carry the products that require the least amount of effort for the customer to have success."

(there's also a model with a rototiller), and cultipacker all in one implement. With one pass, your food plot seed is distributed and covered with soil. Another option is the Genesis Seed Drill. Like the Firminator, it is a one-pass implement, but it doesn't



disc the soil up. Instead, it cuts a slit in the ground, drops the seed and covers it. With the Genesis drill, the ground is never ripped apart and over time can build fertile topsoil on your plots, which improves soil health.

Not every retail outlet is going to sell ATV implements, however. These are expensive pieces of equipment that take up considerable space, and you would need a serious customer base to move these items. Gauge the interest of your customer before going this route.

ATTRACTANTS

Don't overlook attractants. At the end of the day, hunters want to have a shot at a deer, and attractants, where legal, can accomplish this. You might have customers who are interested in food plots but who are not willing



or able to put in the work. And trust me, planting food plots is a lot of work and money. Ani-Logics Outdoors offers an incredible variety of

attractants. They have a line of liquid, powder, block and brick attractants in numerous flavors. Most of these come in 5-pound bags or hard blocks

that easily fit on shelves or displays in a retail environment.

When deciding what to carry in your store for customers interested in planting food plots, I suggest starting small. Carry the products that require the least amount of effort for a customer to have success. Your customer's success will also hinge on your knowledge of planting food plots. If you don't know anything about food plots, do your homework. You can start by calling the folks at Whitetail Institute. They have a dedicated hotline to food plot experts ready to answer your questions and get you set up.

There's something rewarding about working the soil and seeing your efforts spring to life. Seeing a big buck eating on your customers' efforts is even better! **HR**



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Torture Test: Hunting Boots

Lace-up hunting boots are popular with many hunters who want more durability and support than pull-on boots offer. How much abuse can they really take?



ALAN CLEMONS

No one drags their hunting boots behind the truck, smashes them into concrete or lovingly caresses them with dirty limestone gravel. Not intentionally, anyway. But hunting boots typically get put through the wringer during the season and, often, outside of it. They have to be tough, durable, reliable, warm and comfortable, to the point that they're forgotten.

If your customer is not thinking about their hunting boots, that's a good thing. In the stand, blind or walking around searching for upland birds and small game, boots are

the last thing any hunter wants to think about. They're the last thing a hunter should think about, at all. Good hunting boots should be the invisible partner, lending support and traction, every day in the field.

Customers often seek info from you, their friends and online forums for "the best hunting boots." They want to know if the boots will be tough, if they can handle mud and rocks, sand and grit, climbing stand ladders and more. If they're upland bird or small-game hunters, they want to know if the boots will handle briars, corn stobs, muddy and icy

conditions, and thick hedgerows and thickets. They need partners who will be there day after day.

We wanted to find out what some of the most popular lace-up boots could take. LaCrosse, Danner, Irish Setter, Rocky and Muck sent gorgeous test models (see sidebar). These new-in-box beauties even smelled good, like when you get into a new car and just take it all in with one big sniff. Two are leather — the Danner Pronghorn and Rocky Trophy Series — while the Irish Setter VaprTrek, Muck Alpha Pursuit and LaCrosse Ursa ES GTX are designed with an

↑ Before the torture test, left to right: Danner Pronghorn, Lacrosse Ursa ES GTX, Irish Setter VaprTrek, Rocky Trophy and Muck Alpha Pursuit.

.....
abuse-shrugging combo of materials.

Time constraints prevented some tests we had in mind, such as dragging them through a mess of prickly pear cactus. Also, with the combo of boot materials, I didn't subject them to fire. Some hunters stick their boots too close to a campfire while hanging out or to dry them, neither of which is good. Leather dries out near heat.



Composite materials, such as with the VaprTrek or Alpha Pursuit, would end up like Dali's "Persistence of Memory." Mud wouldn't bother the composites, anyway. The mix of leather and composite is apples-oranges for some kinds of tests.

But all five got the same treatment to mimic — hopefully, in a worse way — some of what hunters do to them. These brands and boots are iconic and well-known by hunters. You've sold these brands in your shop for years and should continue to do so. When hunters ask whether these boots are tough or for "the best," point to these to help them make a selection.

THE DRAG

With just a few weeks to give these boots their beatings, we wanted to try to replicate some conditions of walking through fields and pastures. I also wanted to find out if the pull-loop on the rear of the boot cuff would hold up. These loops are there to help hunters pull on boots. If they break, that's not good. These need to be tough and securely affixed.

I connected each boot to a chain with a secure metal clasp and attached the chain to my truck. Then I dragged them for more than five miles through a pasture with briars, gnarly sumac and dried grasses, over a couple of rocky roads, and repeatedly over a pile of crushed limestone. On the rocky roads, I hit speeds of 35 miles per hour several times, with the boot chain bouncing along like a hillbilly wedding add-on.

The boots took only minimal fraying on the cuffs and laces, as expected. Scuffs and nicks in the leather toes were minor, easily buffed out with beewax and elbow grease. None of the pull-loops sustained significant damage. One on the Rocky was torn a bit due to the clasp twisting it, but it still was functional.



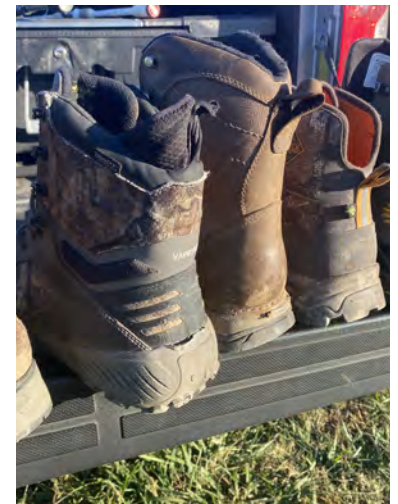
↑ First, the boots were chained to the author's truck and dragged for five miles over nasty terrain, hitting speeds of up to 35 mph.



↑ A scrape test replicated real-world hunting conditions.



↑ As expected, the drag test left some boots scratched and scraped. No pull-loops were damaged, but the cuffs and laces did fray a bit.



TOE, HEEL SCRAPES

The toe cap on boots helps prevent smashed toes if you kick something. It also helps prevent the sole from separating from the upper. A good toe cap should come over the front edge of the boot and be secured extremely well. On some boots, the toe cap extends further, over what would

be the top of the toes.

The edge of the toe cap shouldn't come off during regular use. I scraped the toe cap on each boot hard against the raggedy edge of a chunk of concrete to see if they would separate, peel or detach from the upper. Each boot got 50 hard scrapes, and I checked after each 10

ROCK SLAM/DRAG

Hunters rub, scrape and bang against rocks crossing creeks, in fields, at camp and on the trail. They kick rocks when they're bored, like little kids do, and sometimes out of frustration.

I slammed the toes into the pile of limestone rocks, a good 20 whacks

scrapes. The soft composite edge of only the VaprTrek showed any smidge of separation. It wasn't enough to be concerned about, considering what I'd just raked the boots against.

I did the same to the heel of each boot. Hunters typically will use the edge of the heel, where the sole is attached to the upper, to remove the boot. This pressure over time isn't good because it can cause separation. It's better, although we don't always do it, to unlace the boots enough to remove them by hand. I raked the edge of the rear heel against the concrete 50 times, checking after the first 10, then at 25, and again after 50. Again, a little bit of the VaprTrek rubber was rub-scuffed but nothing more.



just like Lizzie Borden. Then I raked them across the rocks another 20 or so times to test the laces and grommets. Some of the laces frayed, of course, but nothing else happened (except for a sore hand).

AT THE CAR WASH

Staying dry is a cornerstone of good boots. Hunters traipse through morning dew, rain, creeks and ditches, muddy fields, snow and ice. They get blood and other stuff on their boots at camp in the skinning shed. Sometimes, unfortunately, the boots may get a splash of oil or other engine fluids. Billy Ray may splash grease on them cooking fish at camp.

Boots must stay dry, too, other than normal sweat from walking. That's simple to take care of with a good Peet boot dryer. If they get wet

from walking through snow, rain or other sources, that's uncomfortable. Boots should be weatherproof, at the least, and waterproof at best.

The car wash pressure wand would be a solid test. I zip-tied a zip-top bag around the top of the boots, to see how the tongues and gussets would hold up. High pressure? That's nothing a hunter probably would encounter, but it's quite a test. Downpours can be bad sometimes, and creek or ditch crossings happen. With the boots lined against the car wash wall, I hit them with two minutes of constant, soft spray, one at full blast and one back to soft. After pumping in another couple bucks for four more minutes, the boots got 3:30 or so at full blast before a final 30 seconds on soft.

The LaCrosse boots were barely



↑ The boots endured a high-pressure soaking at the car wash to test how waterproof they really are.



All About Boots

Danner Pronghorn — Long a go-to for many upland and whitetail hunters, the Gen 5 version of the Pronghorn easily will pass muster with its legion of fans. The 8-inch boot features a full-grain leather design (Cordura-leather models are also available) with a Gore-Tex waterproof liner. Some models have 400g of PrimaLoft Gold insulation. A rubberized EVA midsole offers firm cushioning but is more durable than traditional EVA. It has an athletic, supportive design but with plenty of room in the toe box. \$290, www.danner.com

Rocky Trophy Series — An excellent, stable and supportive lace-up at 9 inches designed with waterproof full-grain leather and 900 denier Cordura. It has 400 grams of Thinsulate insulation, perfect for early season and walking, stalking and rumbling. The Trophy Series is designed with Rocky's Air-Port Lite Sponge PU footbed with memory foam, making for an enjoyable fit. Available in Medium and Wide sizes from 8-14. \$155, www.rockyboots.com

Irish Setter VaprTrek — It looks radical, and it is. The new VaprTrek has a host of features, all of which offer comfort, protection and aggressiveness in the field. The Earth Field Camo full-grain leather upper incorporates abrasion-resistant ArmaTec XT material

for enhanced durability. It has an UltraDry waterproofing system, ScentBan technology to kill bacteria, a memory foam insole and more. The wraparound outsole lugs are a great addition for more traction in slick, muddy or icy situations. \$210, www.irishsetterboots.com

Muck Alpha Pursuit — The new Alpha Pursuit provides a tailored fit, and the Muckskin overlays give additional protection without unnecessary weight. The notched heel collar eliminates Achilles fatigue, and the rubber heel reinforcement adds more protection. The midsole is made from BioLite, a top-level, lightweight foam, and the Alpha Pursuit has an aggressive rubber outsole for better traction and debris dispersion. \$185, www.muckbootcompany.com

LaCrosse Ursa ES GTX — This 8-inch hybrid combines a breathable nylon and suede upper that has a Gore-Tex waterproof liner. It has a 4-way stretch collar that includes a softer, flexible spot on the rear where the Achilles tendon flexes. That's a great touch. Weight is reduced thanks to the one-piece shank, lasting board and midsole design. The Vibram MegaGrip outsole is a traction hog on mud, ice, dirt and sand. \$250, www.lacrossefootwear.com

damp inside at the top of the tongue gusset, but they dried quickly. As expected with its comfortably softer design, the Muck took more water (about a half-cup) but dried incredibly quickly. The Rocky's thicker, softer tongue also was damp inside. The VaprTrek and Pronghorn were dry, shrugging off the blasts with ease.

Nothing really surprised me about these boots. I've worn different models from each of these brands over the years. I have a pair of Pronghorns that

fit like a glove, and when they finally wear out, I'll be sad. Any good boots should be that way, just like with a favorite shirt or jeans. Your customers likely are familiar with these brands, too, whether they're veterans or younger folks starting out. All of these lace-up models are well-designed workhorses built to last and withstand tough conditions in myriad hunting situations. When your customers ask about boots, don't shy away from singing the praises for these. **HR**





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CROSSFIRE





Muzzleloaders: Stocking the Classics

Blackpowder rifles still sell, and these models are sure to please.

BY KAT AINSWORTH STEVENS

Muzzleloaders have quite the history backing them — the earliest designs can be traced to the 12th century — and they remain useful to this day. Whether your customers prefer the classic, reliable style of these guns or live in states with a muzzleloader season that increases their odds of filling deer tags, it's a good idea to keep some quality models in stock. Muzzleloaders are making a real comeback, and this is a trend you want to be on top of. Here are some of our top picks for muzzleloaders to have on hand for your customers.





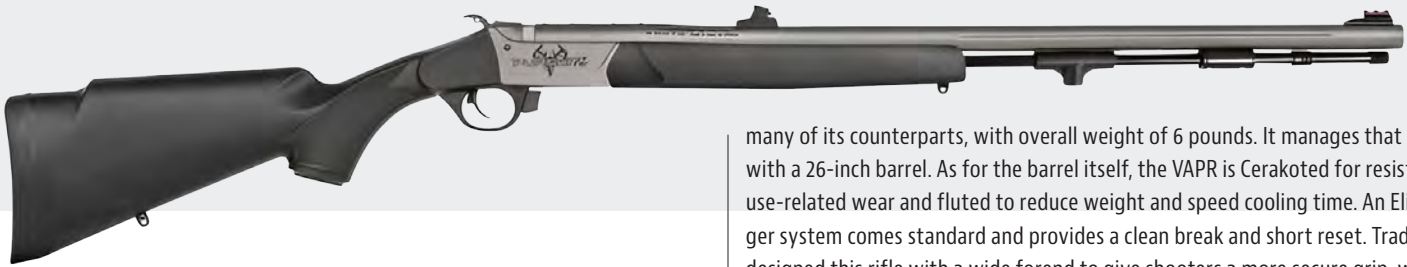
REMINGTON 700 UML (ULTIMATE MUZZLELOADER)

The combination of the proven Remington 700 platform and the beauty of a muzzle-loader makes the 700 UML a great gun. This .50-caliber gun is designed to bring muzzle-loaders into the 21st century in the best ways possible. Remington accomplishes this by making it possible to clean the gun without removing the breech plug and creating a flash channel that can stay cleaner longer. The 700 UML features the gun maker's U.M.L. ignition system and a beautifully crisp Timney trigger.

Remington created this rifle for superior overall performance by focusing on quality

and strength. The Model 700 receiver provides durability and strength, while the 26-inch stainless steel, fluted barrel offers a long life and accuracy. A full-length aluminum bedding block is another noteworthy feature. The bolt of the gun is jeweled and cycles smoothly. This rifle is drilled and tapped for optics, has a hinged floor-plate storage compartment for casings, and boasts an H-S Precision stock for comfort and a solid cheek weld. Remington states the effective range of this muzzleloader is 300 yards — if the customer utilizes their Premier AccuTip bullets — and that alone makes this a good model to keep in stock.

Dimensions include an overall length of 47 inches, length of pull of 13 3/8-inches, and drop at comb of 1 1/8-inches. The Remington 700 UML weighs approximately 9.5 pounds. MSRP \$1,499.



TRADITIONS PURSUIT XT NORTHWEST MAGNUM

For the hunter interested in a well-made yet budget-friendly model, there's the Traditions Pursuit XT Northwest Magnum. This rifle is the manufacturer's next generation in their Pursuit family of muzzleloaders and features a VAPR barrel for enhanced accuracy. Thanks to the 1:24 twist rate of the VAPR barrel, bullets are better stabilized, and hunters can use a wider variety of bullets. This line of muzzleloaders is also made to meet the requirements of restrictive states such as Idaho and Oregon, meaning guns have open sights, a musket ignition, and an open breech.

The Traditions Pursuit XT Northwest Magnum muzzleloader is lighter weight than

many of its counterparts, with overall weight of 6 pounds. It manages that weight even with a 26-inch barrel. As for the barrel itself, the VAPR is Cerakoted for resistance to use-related wear and fluted to reduce weight and speed cooling time. An Elite XT trigger system comes standard and provides a clean break and short reset. Traditions also designed this rifle with a wide forend to give shooters a more secure grip, which is a great feature for a .50-caliber firearm.

This is a feature-rich rifle despite its lower price point — in fact, it manages to out-perform its cost. Useful features include a dual safety system — rebounding hammer and cross block manual trigger safety — and a speed loading system. After all, hunters want to reload smoothly and quickly rather than miss out on the buck of a lifetime due to loading-related delays. The gun's Accelerator Breech Plug allows the shooter to use loose and pelletized powder, which fits nicely with the ability to choose from a broader bullet selection. This rifle is drilled and tapped for easy addition of a scope. It's an excellent muzzleloader to keep in stock for budget-minded hunters. MSRP starts at \$419.95.



CVA CROSSFIRE

The CVA Crossfire is the popular gun maker's answer to compatibility with the Firestick ignition system. Firestick is a system created by Federal that allows charging from the breech — in compatible firearms — and loading from the muzzle. It's highly resistant to moisture and made according to tight tolerances for greater consistency on target. And, of course, it makes loading faster, easier and cleaner. The CVA Crossfire is made to make the most of the Firestick ignition system and offers a host of features that make it the gun to have on hand for hunters searching for modern platforms.

This is a .50-caliber muzzleloader with a 26-inch barrel. Its overall length is 41 inches, leaving it relatively maneuverable in the woods or deer blind. Empty weight is 8 pounds.

CVA offers the Crossfire with either a stainless finish with black furniture or with Patriot Brown Cerakote and Escape Camo furniture. It's a good plan to consider having both color options in stock to fit the preferences of hunters who do and do not prefer camo patterns on their guns.

Features of the Crossfire include a 1:28 twist rate and a recommendation from CVA to use their ELR Series of Powerbelt bullets. CVA ships the rifle with a Picatinny rail so hunters can add optics, and integral attachment points make adding a sling simple. The ramrod fits securely under the barrel. And although the break-action takes a bit of force to open for charging, the fact that the gun doesn't have a breech plug to mess with makes it worth it. CVA has a well-deserved reputation for designing and manufacturing quality long guns, and the Crossfire is yet another example of that excellence. The CVA Crossfire is great not only for customers interested in muzzleloaders with a modern take, but also for newbies who want a simpler, neater approach. MSRP starts at \$450.





DAVIDE PEDERSOLI OLD ENGLISH MAPLE SIDE-BY-SIDE

For customers interested in muzzleloading shotguns, there's Davide Pedersoli, the manufacturer that's the gold standard for this type of gun. The Davide Pedersoli Old English Maple Side-by-Side is a 12-gauge shotgun with a beautifully finished stock and engraved capbox. Fantastic attention to detail is evident in the aesthetic of this muzzleloader, but it's also a reliable, accurate shotgun.

The Old English Maple Side-by-Side's barrels are 27 9/16-inches in length and have a rust brown finish to reduce glare and help them blend in during the hunt. Its overall length is 44 1/8-inches and empty weight is 6.83 pounds. This is a carefully streamlined, slim muzzleloader. The gun's double triggers bring to mind long guns of hunts long since past, and percussion ignition adds to that nostalgic feel. This is the muzzleloading shotgun for the discerning customer interested in a classic firearm that can be passed down to future generations of hunters. MSRP \$2,145.



TRADITIONS BUCKSTALKER XT YOUTH MODEL

Many customers will be interested in youth-size muzzleloaders. Introducing children and grandchildren to hunting goes more smoothly when the gun being used has a shortened length of pull and smaller overall fitment. The Traditions Buckstalker XT Youth Model is a fantastic option for customers looking to outfit the smaller members of their families with a muzzleloader to get them into deer hunting. This gun is compact, easy to use, and affordably priced — it ticks all the right boxes for a nice little gun for kids.

The Traditions Buckstalker XT Youth Model is a .50-caliber rifle based on the company's proven line of Buckstalker rifles. It has a 24-inch premium chromoly barrel for durability. Length of pull is reduced to 13 inches, giving younger shooters improved comfort and control over their firearm. Other youth-friendly features include the Accelerator Breech Plug, Dual Safety System, and Quick-T Ramrod Handle. The Elite XT Trigger System offers a smooth pull and clean break. All features are easy to operate and simple to get youth shooters accustomed to using muzzleloaders in the field.

This rifle has an effective range of 200 yards and is drilled and tapped for optics. Sling swivel studs come standard. Encourage customers to get the next generation into hunting with muzzleloaders by steering them to the Traditions Buckstalker XT Youth Model. MSRP \$269.95.

Muzzleloader Optics and Ammo

Modern muzzleloaders are usually drilled and tapped for optics at the factory, and some ship with Picatinny rails. That makes using quality glass easy and gives you an opening to discuss including optics in the sale of the muzzleloader. The **Riton 3 Primal 3-9x40mm EER** (Extended Eye Relief) is a high quality optic capable of withstanding the recoil muzzleloaders produce. This scope is made with hunters in mind and delivers performance and value customers will appreciate.

Features of the Riton 3 Primal 3-9x40mm EER include capped turrets, a fast-focus eyepiece, and an aircraft

grade aluminum body for exceptional durability. Riton assembles these scopes in an EP-level clean room. This model is 100% waterproof, fog proof, and shockproof, with testing for the latter being done up to 1200 G's. The lens is fully multi-coated, making it resistant to the weather your customers will experience during their hunts. The 3 Primal 3-9x40mm EER has a Duplex reticle for rapid target acquisition. This is a second focal plane optic. MSRP \$249.99.

Customers will need ammunition for their muzzleloaders, and that's where the **Hornady Bore Driver FTX** comes in. Hornady is renowned for their bullets, and

the Bore Driver FTX is an excellent choice for customers looking for a good hunting projectile. The base of these bullets is enclosed with polymer to seal the bore for superior energy transfer and accuracy. As for the bullet itself, it has a gilding metal jacket and polymer tip for dramatic wound channels. The .50-caliber bullet is offered in either 290 grain or 340 grain and ships in a pack of 20 projectiles. MSRP \$35.99. **HR**



The Academic-Research-Media Complex Strikes Again, Suggesting Hunters Are Poisoning Bald Eagles

The studies that “experts” cite when claiming that hunters are poisoning eagles are always flawed and misinterpreted. That’s no accident.

BY SALAM FATOHI

Yet another study has been published that claims the use of lead-based ammunition by hunters is the root cause of rampant poisoning of America’s bald eagles.

Like clockwork, the media runs with these “studies” with breathless coverage that hunters are killing bald eagles.

A new Cornell University study posits bald eagles are especially susceptible to lead poisoning as a result of hunters taking game in New York and that using traditional lead component ammunition puts humans at severe risk of being poisoned. Overwhelming evidence shows that the recovery of bald eagles is truly remarkable and that across the United States they are thriving like never before, thanks to hunters.

NEW STUDY, SAME ANTI-HUNTING IMPLICATIONS

A new study from Cornell University examined 30 different species of bird and mammal scavengers in New York to study which is the most susceptible to lead poisoning. The study utilized and analyzed game camera images contributed by New York residents. According to the study, New York researchers then “identified and analyzed 14 birds and 17 mammals, from American crows



to Virginia opossums,” according to the Cornell Chronicle. “Considering each species’ numbers, physical traits and opportunity to scavenge...the team determined bald eagles are most at risk from ingesting toxic debris from lead bullets.”

Noting that the public often reports sick or dead bald eagles more often than other scavengers, Krysten Schuler, a wildlife disease ecologist in the Cornell College of Veterinary Medicine, said, “A surprising number of species are at risk, and we can use bald eagles to continue to monitor

lead issues because they are quite vulnerable.”

The study analyzed nearly 160 images from 33 game cameras which were captured between 2010 and 2023, so approximately one image each month over 14 years.

A variety of animals were seen on the camera images, including scavenging birds like eagles, hawks, owls, mourning doves, woodpeckers, cardinals and blue jays. The images also caught larger mammals such as squirrels, weasels, skunks, coyotes, bobcats and foxes.

That’s the entirety of the study in a nutshell. Trail camera images over 14 years.

BUNK CONCLUSIONS

It’s no surprise media ran with the study’s anti-hunter conclusions. The bald eagle is America’s most majestic symbol — everyone wants bald eagles to thrive and anything that threatens their existence should be stopped. But that’s not what has happened, not what the data and science show is currently happening, and hunters are largely responsible for the bald eagles’



remarkable recovery. From the media, you wouldn't know it.

"The findings support ongoing efforts to encourage hunters to use non-lead ammunition," reported FingerLakes1.com.

"The study said that the most common bullets used to hunt deer shatter on impact into hundreds of fragments that spread into the body," WGNB TV News added from Johnson City, New York. The Cornell Chronicle added even more laughable conclusions just to make sure news consumers would be thoroughly scared.

"A piece of lead smaller than a grain of rice can kill an eagle, and no amount of the neurotoxin is considered safe for humans — particularly pregnant women and children."

All the reporting concludes with the study's key takeaway: hunters should stop using traditional lead-based bullets.

WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING

The money given to universities to produce anti-hunting studies would be better off directly spent on conservation and wildlife management efforts. America's hunters are doing that each and every time they buy more traditional lead-based ammunition if that's the ammo that works best for them. The proof is in the data.

Nationally, the bald eagle population, once on the precipice of extinction, is back and thriving.

Three years ago, Secretary of Interior Deb Haaland reported more than 71,400 nesting pairs of American bald eagles in the Lower 48, and more than 316,000 individual birds. That's a quadrupling for the bald eagle population since 2009.

American bald eagles' remarkable turnaround from the dire numbers in 1963 — when there were only 417



nesting pair — led to Sec. Haaland declaring bald eagle recovery "truly a historic conservation success story."

Want New York-specific data to counter the Cornell study? Look at The Wildlife Society Bulletin's 2022 report titled "Population impact to bald eagles by ingested lead in New York State, 1990–2018." This study covered 28 years — twice the Cornell study — and comes to a completely different conclusion.

"From 1990 to 2018, New York State exhibited expanding bald eagle populations with empirical abundances rising from 13 breeding pairs in 1990 to 369 breeding pairs in 2018," the WSB report stated. Expanding further, the WSB report revealed, "Over the same period, the NYSDEC Wildlife Health Unit generated necropsy records on 594 individual eagles that died in New York State. Of these records, 0.082 experienced Pb-poisoning (accord-

ing to our thresholds), 0.061 experienced Pb-exposure (but did not have Pb-poisoning), 0.418 were tested for Pb in liver but did not have Pb-exposure nor Pb-poisoning, 0.241 were not tested for Pb in liver, 0.017 had unknown results, and 0.182 were not tested for Pb in any tissue."

To be clear, almost 250 New York bald eagles, over 40%, were tested and had no lead exposure.

THE FACTS

Hunters are America's original conservationists. American hunters have used lead-based traditional ammunition for the taking of game for more than 400 years. Even the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) note there has never been a documented instance of a human falling ill after ingesting game harvested with traditional ammunition. Yet over and over and over and over again, anti-hunter activists claim America's hunters must be punished in order to safeguard wildlife.

To date, hunters have helped contribute more than \$27 billion, when adjusted for inflation, in Pittman-Robertson excise taxes to the Wildlife Restoration Trust Fund since 1937, over 90% of which is directly from firearms and ammunition manufacturers. The fund benefits all by supporting wildlife conservation efforts that encourage abundant wild-

"The money given to universities to produce anti-hunting studies would be better off directly spent on conservation and wildlife management."

life and habitat restoration along with access to public lands for hunters, anglers and other recreationists.

What the science shows is that wildlife populations have never been healthier in America, all while hunters have used traditional hunting ammunition for centuries. NSSF supports a hunter's choice to pick the right ammunition for them and their hunt. Calls to outright ban traditional ammunition and put restrictions in place that create roadblocks for hunters are detrimental to the user-pays system that allows America's abundant wildlife populations to thrive. **HR**



BY GORDY KRAHN

HUNTING RETAILER NEW PRODUCTS

BEAR ARCHERY WHITETAIL NIT

The Bear Whitetail is a cornerstone in compound bow history, and to continue this legacy Bear Archery has launched the Whitetail INT. Featuring the EKO cam system, this bow is capable of speeds up to 339 fps, while offering the shooter up to an ultra-comfortable 90 percent let-off. Now featuring an Integrate Mounting System rest and Picatinny sight mounting locations, customization has never been easier. The Whitetail INT also includes a new roller cable guard system to provide an ultimate smooth draw. KillerWave limb dampeners are in place to make this bow seemingly dead on the shot. It features a 6.5-inch brace height, measures 31 inches axle to axle and has an adjustable draw length from 26 to 30 inches. MSRP: \$629.99. www.beararchery.com



BUK OPS X-FACTOR CROSSBOW RANGE-FINDING SCOPE

The Buk Ops X-Factor Crossbow Range-Finding Scope from Buck Commander changes the way hunters maintain accurate yardage without losing sight of their trophy, by measuring the yardage to a deer without the hassle of lowering or resetting the position of their crossbow. The X-Factor features a built-in angle-compensating laser rangefinder that is activated instantly with the simple press of a button. Holding the range button down enables Scan Mode, which actively tracks the range of a target as it moves. Whether navigating hilly terrain or taking a shot from an elevated position, the X-Factor adapts seamlessly. With the X-Factor Speed Dial FPS precision reticle, hunters can easily fine-tune their optic to match the arrow speed of their crossbow. MSRP: \$599.99. www.bukops.com

APEX AMMUNITION 20-GAUGE WATERFOWL BLEND

Apex Ammunition is expanding its TSS/S3 Steel Waterfowl Blend line of shotshells with the addition of a 20-gauge, 3-inch load, combining 7/8-ounce No. 2 steel and 1/4-ounce No. 7.5 Tungsten Super Shot. These handcrafted duplex loads are versatile for a variety of hunting situations with the steel patterning especially well for closer shots over decoys followed by the TSS, which has greater retained energy at longer ranges. The zinc coating on Apex's S3 Steel pellets reduces friction, resulting in more consistent pellet drop when loading the shotshells and better movement of the pellets against each other in the firing process. The combination delivers lethal patterning, maximum barrel protection and shot-to-shot consistency. MSRP: \$48.99/25-round box; \$479.99/Per 250. www.apexammunition.com



REMINGTON NITRO-STEEL DUPLEX SHOTSHELLS

Nitro-Steel Duplex Shotshells from Remington offer a unique shot load, featuring a combination of two shot sizes for deadly patterns at close and long ranges, ensuring optimal performance in various shooting scenarios. A super tough and versatile four-petal shot cup protects barrels and performs exceptionally well across a wide range of choke designs. With Nitro velocity, these shotshells provide maximum speed for true magnum-blended steel payloads, delivering outstanding power and performance. The Premier hull features a high base and drab hull to minimize reflection in the blind. As with all Remington ammunition, Nitro-Steel Duplex undergoes rigorous testing and quality control measures to ensure it meets the company's stringent standards and comes in four 12-gauge shot sizes. MSRP: \$42.99/Box of 25. www.remington.com

DICKINSON ARMS 12-GAUGE CLEANING KIT AND GUN OIL

Dickinson Arms has introduced a new Gun Oil and Shotgun Cleaning Kit that will have users' firearms operating at peak performance. Its nanoparticle Gun Oil will keep any firearm working smoothly and help prevent corrosion and wear. The new 12-Gauge Cleaning Kit was designed to be portable, allowing users to clean their shotguns at home, on the road or in the field. It includes stainless-steel rods and a handle, bore brush, cotton mop, spring brush, patches, double-end brush, muzzle guard and brass patch holder. Add in Dickinson's Gun Oil for a potent cleaning kit that will have shotguns operating at their best, no matter how dirty they get. MSRP: \$12.99/Gun cleaning kit; \$14.95/Gun oil. www.dickinson-arms.com



ZEISS CONQUEST HDX 8X42MM BINOCULAR

Zeiss' new Conquest HDX family of binoculars includes the compact 8x42mm offering. Thanks to the high-definition (HD) concept, the Conquest HDX delivers great optical quality and 90 percent light transmission, resulting in vibrantly sharp images, even in low-light conditions, and Zeiss FieldFlattener technology ensures high resolution over the entire field of view. The T* lens coating guarantees brilliant, high contrast images. The Conquest HDX's full rubber armoring ensures protection and provides a secure grip, even in humid and rainy conditions, and thanks to the hydrophobic Zeiss LotuTec lens coating, water rolls off effortlessly and dirt and fingerprints are repelled. MSRP: \$999.99. www.zeiss.com





SAVAGE ARMS 21 SHARP RIMFIRE RIFLES

Savage Arms has announced the release of four rifle models chambered in Winchester's new 21 Sharp rimfire cartridge. With a muzzle velocity of up to 1,750 fps in 25-grain bullets, the 21 Sharp utilizes straight profile, non-heeled bullets that enable the use of efficient aerodynamic and modern bullet shapes for enhanced accuracy. Target shooters will be able to fully utilize this cartridge in a modern Savage B Series F comfortable-shooting rifle. Its button-rifled barrel pushes precision to new levels and its ergonomic stock provides shooters with a range of options to suit individual preferences. Multiple Mark II options in 21 Sharp will also appeal to a variety of shooters and hunters. All 21 Sharp Savage rifles feature the revolutionary AccuTrigger. MSRP: \$269-\$389. www.savagearms.com

RADIANS RHG-A900 HAND WARMER

Made from wind-resistant material, the Radians RHG-A900 Heated Hand Warmer offers warmth and comfort with or without gloves. Its battery-powered system delivers hours of heat with three adjustable settings to customize the warmth generated. With a no-noise polyester outer shell and a cozy fleece lining, this hand warmer features two zipper accessory pockets for storing a phone, keys and other essentials. It also has an exterior pocket for the 7.4V battery and a strap with an accessory hook. Battery life is up to four hours on High, up to eight hours on Medium and up to 10 hours on Low. Available in camo and black, the Radians Hand Warmer is practical for any cold weather hunting application. MSRP \$135.99. www.radians.com



WENZEL'S FARM VENISON SNACK STICKS

Wenzel's Farm now offers its Venison Snack Sticks in three varieties — made with grass-fed venison and gluten free, making them a great, high-protein snack for hunters who want a grab-and-go snack. They are available in Original, Teriyaki and Jalapeno Cheddar flavors. Wenzel's Farm offers 14 tasty beef snack stick varieties and five varieties of jerky, all of which are crafted in small batches using premium cuts of meat, perfectly seasoned and naturally hard-wood smoked — a tradition that has been in place since the Wenzel's Family first started producing quality meat products in 1949. The Venison Snack Sticks come in a single-serve 1.5-ounce package. MSRP: \$2.49. www.wenzelsfarm.com



NOSLER WHITETAIL COUNTRY AMMUNITION

Nosler's Whitetail Country was designed for hunting deer — engineered to deliver premium terminal performance and reliability. The line features two standout bullets. The Solid Base bullet incorporates a fifth-generation tapered jacket and a heavy solid base to deliver deep penetration and optimal expansion for quick, efficient kills. Nosler's Straight-Wall bullet is tailored for the slower impact velocities typical of straight-wall cartridges. It boasts a flat base, thin jacket at the tip and lead nose to ensure reliable expansion, even at extended ranges. The truncated nose design allows for smooth feeding across various action types, while the form-fitted lead core enhances stability and accuracy. Whitetail Country is available in eight calibers. MSRP: Starts at \$34.95/Box of 20. www.nosler.com

BIG & J COTTON CRAVE DEER ATTRACTANT

Thanks to its unique blend and powerful aroma, Cotton Crave Deer Attractant from Big & J attracts deer and keeps them coming back. Unlike ordinary feeds such as corn, Cotton Crave offers a unique blend specifically designed to keep deer returning to feeding sites. With key ingredients and Big & J's unique flavor enhancers, Cotton Crave has the power to draw bucks from longer distances. The incorporation of cotton seed into Cotton Crave adds to its appeal. Big & J leverages this preference by combining it with the robust aroma and attracting the power of its popular formulas. Big & J ensures that Cotton Crave delivers a high-quality protein blend formulated for maximum attraction and herd health. MSRP: \$12.99/8 pounds; \$19.99/20 pounds; \$34.99/40 pounds. www.bigandj.com



CANYON COOLERS PRO 85 COOLER

The Pro 85 Cooler from Canyon Coolers was intuitively designed for hunters and hardcore outdoor enthusiasts who demand the best in quality, function and durability. With a true 85-quart capacity, this premium ice chest is longer in length (34x20x17.5 inches) than comparable coolers, and is equipped with a host of valuable features hunters and outdoor enthusiasts will appreciate, starting with the front and side drain plugs. The cooler's premium eco-friendly pressure-injected foam insulation ensures world-class ice retention, keeping provisions ice cold even when outside temps reach all-time highs. Front and rear lip slots make tying it down with cam straps simple, keeping it securely fastened. The Pro 85 incorporates upgraded oversized latches built from premium, sun-resistant polymer. MSRP: \$400. www.canyoncoolers.com



HUNTING RETAILER GEAR ROUNDUP

Cold-Weather Hunting Apparel

Make sure your patrons are dressed to stick it out on stand during the deep chill of late season.

BY GORDY KRAHN

As cold, late-season weather sets in, hunters sift through their hunting gear closet, looking for garments that will keep them warm and dry during those long days on stand. Many fall short and pay the price. Only when they can comfortably brave the cold — fidget free — will they optimize those late-season hours on stand, and that means dressing for the chill. Fortunately for today's hunters, modern textile technology has made this easy, with companies offering high-quality layered clothing systems designed to keep hunters comfortable in any hunting situation — whether it's cold, rainy, snowy, windy or all of the above. By dressing in layers, hunters are able to fine-tune their clothing for any conceivable environment — and with each layer sporting a camo pattern, they're always concealed as they shed or put on

additional layers. It all begins with a high-quality base layer designed for the coldest conditions. These wool or synthetic undergarments provide warmth during those long sits and wick sweat away from the body when hunters are on the move. The intermediate layer is often a mid-weight fleece garment, over which a hoodie is added to keep wind off the neck. An outer shell, a warm, moisture-resistant, wind-breaking jacket and pants or bibs completes the ensemble. Some garments even come equipped with battery-powered electric coils to provide added heat in the most extreme conditions. Be sure your patrons stay cozy and warm during their late-season adventures this season by having a wide array of cold-weather hunting garments on hand that are sure to generate warm thoughts. Here are a few to get you started.

Badlands Pyre Jacket

Badlands created the Pyre Jacket (\$379.99) for frigid sits, when breath freezes in mid-air but re-treating from the field just isn't an option. The 160-gram PrimaLoft Silver fill is perfect when Jack Frost comes calling. Just to be safe, the Pyre is 100% waterproof, too — because cold and wet is a very bad combo. Finally, the Pyre's articulated arms make it easy to adjust the hood and the cuffs or get into the interior rangefinder pocket. Other key features include a treestand tether exit port, fully taped waterproof seams, fleece lining, longer coat tail and fleece-lined hand warmer pockets.

www.badlandsgear.com



Code of Silence ColdFjall 2.0 Parka

The ColdFjall 2.0 Parka from Code of Silence (\$280) is built to keep hunters warm in the most extreme temperatures they might face in the whitetail woods, all while delivering on fit and function. Its Neutral-LR technology and S-18 camo blend into the natural aspects of the woods like no other. The Parka contains an advanced proprietary ergo-engineered body, hood and sleeve design that allows for unmatched fit and function. Other features include a double zipper "collarless collar" front closer system for improved ventilation and comfort. Sleeve cuffs in the front pockets with Air-Sherpa lining keep hands warm and ready, and double drawstring body and adjustable hood and crown provide an ideal fit regardless of under-garment choice. www.codeofsilence.com



DeWalt Heated Hoodie Sweatshirt

The DeWalt Heated Hoodie (\$276) was designed for hunters who won't let the cold send them home early. This isn't just a hoodie — it's a hunter's secret weapon against freezing temps. With three heat zones strategically placed across the body core and three adjustable heat settings, hunters can stay warm and focused, no matter how long the wait. And the Realtree Xtra camouflage shell helps them disappear into the surroundings, while the thermal waffle knit lining adds comfort and warmth. The hoodie is equipped with a DeWalt 20V battery, delivering hours of continuous heat. Plus, with a fast charger and adapter, it's always powered up and ready to go. The included USB power adapter also provides juice for recharging a phone or GPS.

www.dewalt.com



ScentLok Divergent Jacket and Pants

Designed for late-season performance and comfort, the ScentLok BE:1 Divergent Jacket and Pants Combo (\$449.99-\$459.99/ Jacket; \$419.99-\$429.99/ Pants) delivers extreme warmth and comfort without unnecessary bulk via premium, thermal-mapped PrimaLoft Gold insulation. And for scent control, both garments feature Carbon Alloy technology for maximum odor adsorption. The jacket has a removable, built-in, adjustable hood and facemask that provide additional concealment and protection from the elements while also helping contain and lock away odors generated from the mouth, nose, hair and facial skin. Divergent pants are equipped with removable, adjustable suspenders and feature nine covered pockets for dry storage and articulated knees for a greater range of motion. Precip-X technology keeps the user dry without a noisy waterproof membrane.

www.scentlok.com



Treezyn Impizi Bibs

Tough, quiet and breathable, Impizi Bibs from Treezyn (\$325) are built for extreme hunting conditions. Impizi four-layered fabric was engineered to lock in body heat and lock out the cold, and three-layer waterproofing + windproofing ensures that users will stay warm and dry. Impizi insulated hunting bibs provide protection against the elements, durability and comfort. Other outstanding features include hip-high leg zippers for easy on/off, neoprene side panels to lock in heat and keep out cold/water, never-fail YKK zippers, five zippered pockets and HD suspenders. Temperature rating is 10 degrees F — 0 degrees F with Heat base layer.

www.treezyn.com



Viktos Blodjeger Flannel Jacket

The traditional flannel shirtjac got a high-tech overhaul with Viktos' new Blodjeger Flannel Jacket (\$195), designed and developed by U.S. veterans, featuring a robust poly/spandex chassis and interior stretch panels that allow for a dynamic range of motion without a bulky fit. FitLite insulation in the body and sleeves provides warmth and comfort, and reinforced forearm and shoulder overlays ensure it lasts long enough to become a family heirloom. Gunvent zippers allow instant access to any hip-mounted sidearm, and zippered hand and chest pockets help keep trail mix and important documents safe and secure. Hidden chest snaps eliminate the possibility of snagging on bowstrings or rifle stocks when it's time to punch in and go to work. www.viktos.com



TUO Gear Nivor Jacket and Bibs

Nivor Jacket and Bibs from TUO Gear (\$299/Each) are great late-season hunting companions. Both garments feature strategically zoned Paralite synthetic insulation, built to enhance mobility. Hidden within its silent two-layer design is an AeroGuard windproof membrane, which provides exceptional heat retention and shielding against cold winds, while reducing noise for stealthy movement. The Nivor jacket features an ultra-quiet microberber fleece upper body and collar backed with a warm sherpa fleece lining for incredible warmth. The sleeves and lower body utilize a brushed tricot shell and a nano-grid fleece lining for lighter-weight warmth and mobility. The bibs are equipped with microberber fleece on the seat and thighs for added warmth, while brushed tricot fabric is applied on the upper torso and below the knees. www.tuogear.com



Voormi Sportsman's Two-Pocket Hoodie

Recognized as a top innovation by Popular Science, the Sportsman's Two-Pocket Hoodie from Voormi (\$329) is more than just an average sweatshirt. Its Core Construction technology keeps the user warm and dry in harsh weather while the garment remains breathable and quiet. The relaxed fit allows for easy layering, and a unique kangaroo pocket system ensures easy access to essentials even when wearing waders. This versatile hoodie transitions seamlessly from midlayer to outer shell, and pairs perfectly with the Voormi V1 Jacket and Bibs for a complete weatherproof system. Ditch the bulky layers and experience unmatched comfort and performance — the Sportsman's Two-Pocket Hoodie is an all-condition companion, built to last a lifetime of adventure. www.voormi.com





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A Dangerous Trend

Are you paying attention to who's managing wildlife in your state? Increasingly, it's not hunters.

BY BOB ROBB

As a student of history, it's not difficult to find parallels in modern life with things that came before us — often long before. For example, Pericles (495-425 BC), the legendary Greek politician and general during the Golden Age of Athens, once said, “Just because you do not take an interest in politics doesn't mean politics won't take an interest in you.” Today, when it comes to the makeup of state fish and wildlife commissions, politics is playing an increasingly bigger role in both the makeup of these commissions and the decisions they are making, which seriously affects how fish and wildlife are managed in their respective states. It's something you should be paying close attention to.

Nearly a hundred years ago, fish and wildlife management began to be science-based, with bag limits and seasons set accordingly. As more people became recreational hunters and anglers, competing interests turned to elected officials in governor's offices and state legislatures to influence the allocation of wildlife benefits. According to the 2022 Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) Commission Guidebook, in the early 1930's, AGFA “developed the Model Game Law as a way to moderate the influence of partisan politics on wildlife policy and allow for more deliberative decision-making related to complex fish and wildlife management issues. The model law called for creation of citizen Commissions with power over wildlife agency policies and regulations, budgets, and selection of a chief administrator who

would be responsible for carrying out the policies and programs of the agency.” These commissions would ideally, among other things, “reduce undue intrusion of politics into agency and wildlife management;” and, “ensure public engagement in establishing policies and regulations.”

Times change. In modern times, as the percentage of the general population that participates in recreational hunting and fishing continues to diminish, many state fish and wildlife commissioners are not impartial individuals with an intimate knowledge of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, but instead single-issue advocates placed on these boards through the influence of their supporters on governors with the goal of enacting strategic outcomes that adversely affect the ability of the public to hunt and fish.

Examples abound, perhaps none as stark as in Washington state, where I currently live. Exhibit A is commissioner Lorna Smith, who was appointed to the commission in January, 2021, by leftwing governor Jay Inslee in violation of state law (she long served on a county planning commission; state law forbids wildlife commissioners from holding another state, county, or municipal elective or appointive office, which she subsequently resigned following a lawsuit.) She is a card-carrying member of Wildlife For All, an animal rights group dedicated to spreading an animal-rights ideology throughout the nation. In 2023, Smith was a driving force behind canceling spring black bear hunting and turning the

traditional system of game management upside down, removing hunters from the picture. Today, commission meetings often feature discussions of such things as “woke-ism,” “equity,” and “cultural bigotry,” with a little wildlife management thrown in on the side. In 2024, Colorado's state senate confirmed an animal rights lawyer to the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission, a 14-member board not exactly overflowing with avid hunters. The year 2024 also saw the Kansas state legislature pass a law requiring wildlife commissioners to be appointed by elected officials, including party leaders of the state's House and Senate. The list goes on.

These changes in wildlife commission makeups are due in no small part to a measurable shift in how the public values wildlife. The percentage of people in America who describe themselves as “mutualists” — defined as people who believe that people and wildlife are meant to co-exist, and have near-equal rights — is a little more than a third of the general population. According to the Mutualism Co-Op, by definition “mutualism” is a particular strain of anarchist thought. At the same time, just 28% of Americans call themselves “traditionalists” who believe wildlife is a resource to be managed for the benefit of the general public. The influence of hunters and anglers on state fish and game departments, and state game commissions, is dwindling.

This brings to the forefront an argument the traditional hunting and angling communities have had for decades, that being the fact that it is

the sale of hunting and fishing licenses, tags, stamps, and so on, as well as revenue from both the Pittman/Robertson and Dingell/Johnson acts, that have footed the bill for conservation for generations — not to mention the countless volunteer hours sportsmen gladly give to improve wildlife habitat. At the same time, non-consumptive users — bird watchers, wildlife photographers, hikers, mountain bikers, river runners, foragers, and more — pay little, if anything. When will they start chipping in? And when a state wildlife commission decides to ban the hunting of mountain lions, for example, not on the basis of science but on emotion fueled by an anti-hunting agenda, the state loses revenue directly and indirectly associated with that hunt. When cougar, grizzly bear and wolf populations grow and kill big-game animals in ever-increasing numbers, both opportunities and success rates for hunters dwindle — often to the point where the average, everyday hunter begins asking himself, “Is this really worth it anymore?”

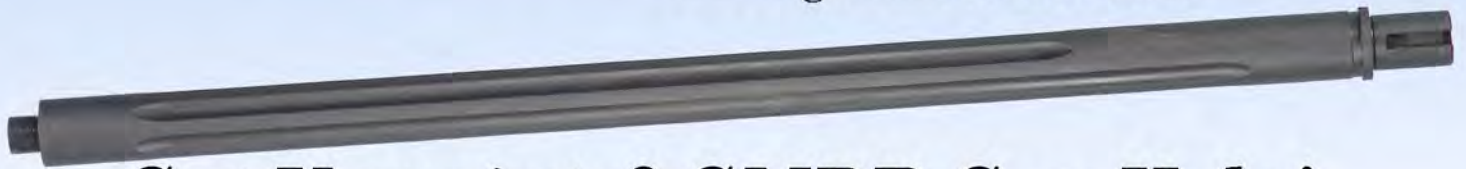
“All politics is local.” So stated Thomas P. “Tip” O'Neill, the Democrat from Massachusetts who served as the 47th speaker of the United States House of Representatives from 1977-1987. It behooves all sportsmen to pay close attention to the state fish and game commission appointment process and advocate for commission appointees that share their values. The future of traditional hook-and-bullet-based management, and your ability to hunt and fish, depends on it. **HR**



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