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WHITE HOT



MARS LT ULTRA LIGHT THERMAL SCOPE



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ZERO**

 **LIGHT
WEIGHT**

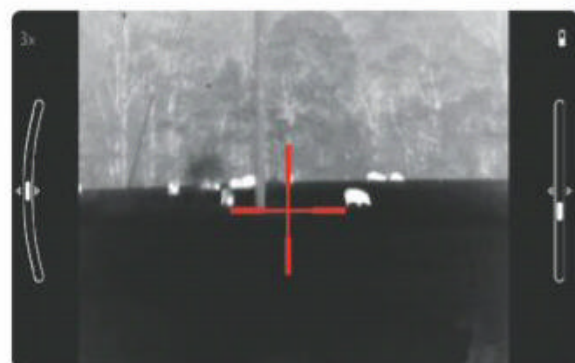
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INTERFACE**



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ULTRA LIGHT

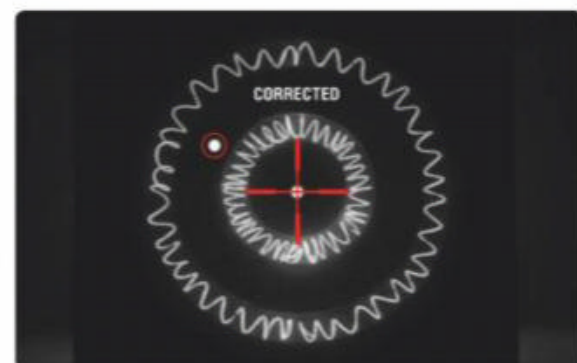
The Mars LT is lightest Thermal Scope in the ATN Mars line, providing more versatility to mount to a crossbow, air rifle, or other platforms where weight is a critical factor.



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Fausti LX victor revealed

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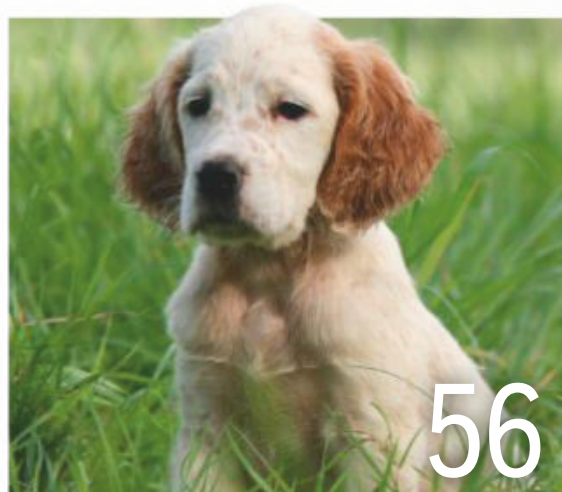
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The rat pack

We are, apparently, never more than a few feet from a rat, this determined rodent being one of nature's success stories since it arrived on our shores in the early 18th century.

Rat populations can, however, quickly get out of control, the rodents spreading disease and damaging feed, cover crops, grain stores and much more.

One humane solution to the problem is the terrier, and Nick Ridley captures the excitement of a day out with the pint-sized pest controllers as they attempt to reduce rodent numbers on one shoot.

Find out more on Page 22



Just as we were going to press I received the news that the major rural organisations want an end to the use of lead and single use plastics in ammunition.

As if the mood was not gloomy enough – what with the challenges to the general licences and release of gamebirds – we now face this.

That said, we should not be down-hearted. Sure, the transition won't be smooth but it is good these organisations are joining forces to help manage change.

New steel loads with biodegradable wads are coming to market from companies such as Eley and Gamebore. Other cartridge manufacturers will develop new non-toxic cartridges that are kinder to the environment as more research and development is done.

We will do an in-depth report on this subject next issue. In the meantime, check out our website, Shooting UK, and our Facebook page for more information. Perhaps the much over-used adage, "Keep calm and carry on" is appropriate here.

Matt

MATT CLARK, EDITOR

Defra extends general licences for five months until August

Defra has confirmed that six general licences will be reissued for a period of five months.

The decision has brought to an end the immediate uncertainty surrounding the licences, which were due to expire on 29 February. The licences – GL26, GL28, GL31, GL34, GL35 and GL36 – will be temporarily reissued from 1 March to 31 July. No action is required by licence users other than to abide by the conditions.

Shooting groups have welcomed the extension. Caroline Bedell, BASC's executive director of conservation, said: "It is a relief that as the clock neared midnight, Defra did not bow to the legal pressures and have allowed themselves additional time to make the right decision. It allows people to at least plan ahead." She added that BASC would continue to work with Defra and parliamentarians to "ensure a fit for purpose and future proofed [licensing] system can be launched on 1 August".

The Countryside Alliance echoed these sentiments and said that the decision demonstrated that Defra understood the importance of the licences.

The National Gamekeepers' Organisation also welcomed the extension at a key time for controlling predators of nesting birds and young livestock. It, however, struck a note of caution about the ability to control pest birds on European Protected Sites.

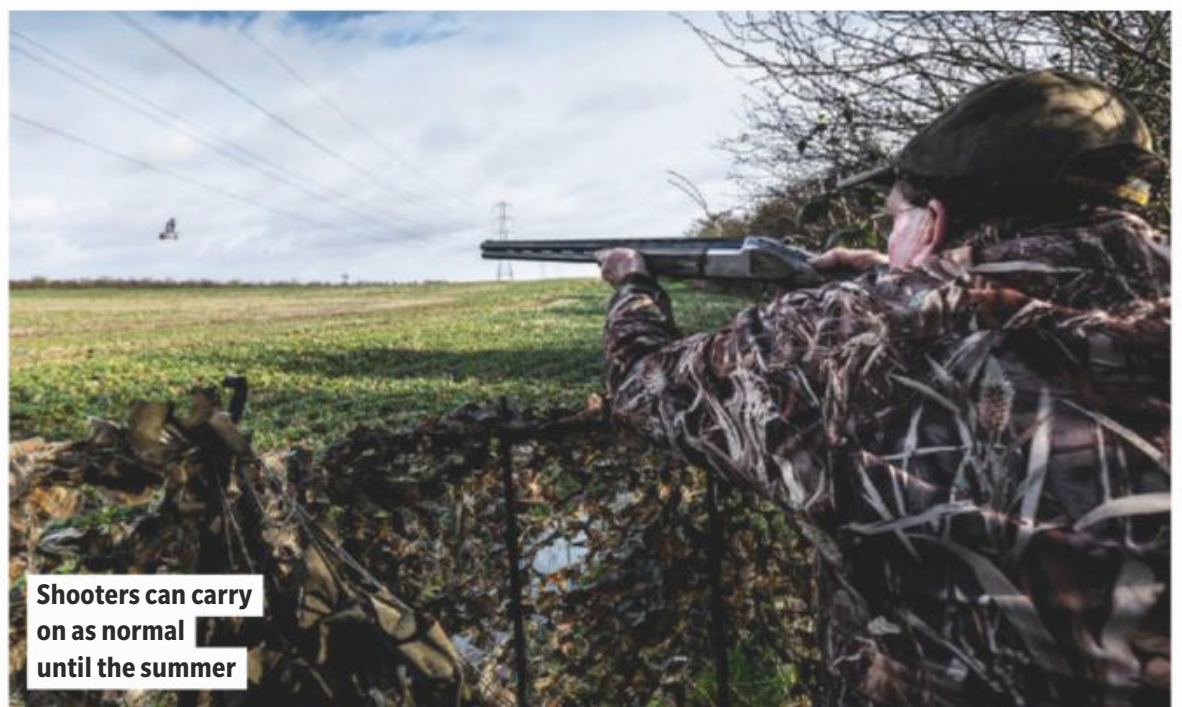
The department is still collating evidence from a long-term review it instigated last summer after taking over administration of the licences from Natural England (NE). This followed a period of uncertainty after NE revoked the licences in April following the threat of a legal challenge by Wild Justice, the wildlife campaign group, who said that the licences were not fit for purpose. The review closed on 5 December last year and in the intervening period there has been much speculation from countryside groups as to potential outcomes.

Defra has said that it intends to publish the new licences in early July to allow users to become acquainted with any changes before they come into force on 1 August.

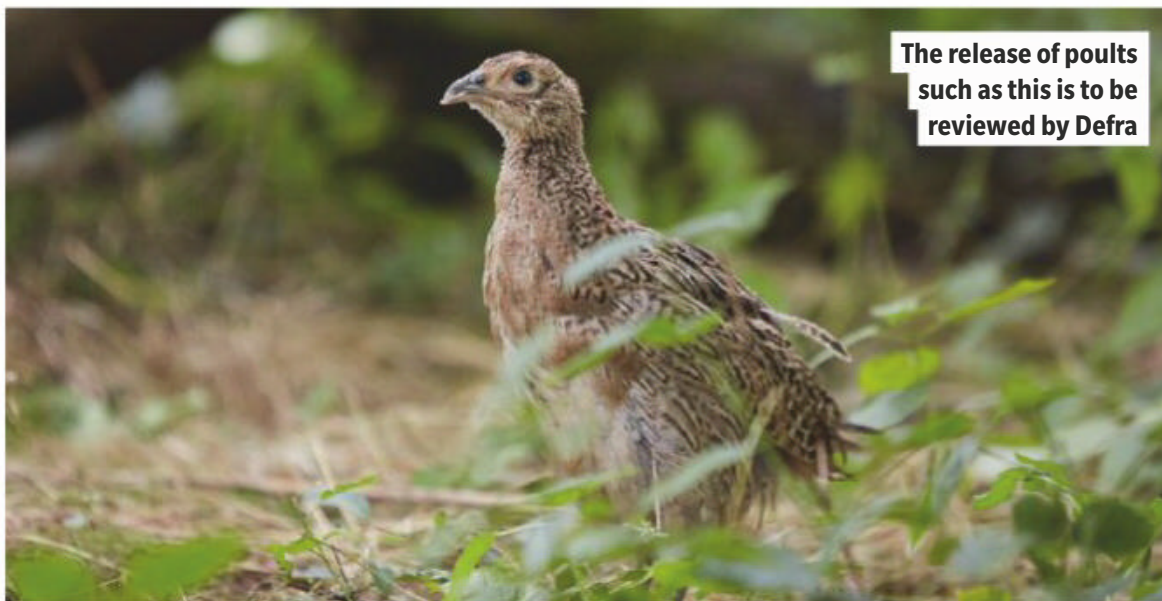
Theresa Villiers, the former Environment Secretary (she was replaced by George Eustice in the recent cabinet reshuffle), said: "We are working intensively on delivering a robust licensing system for the future which balances the different interests at stake in a fair way."

Wild Justice issued a statement on its website in which it called the postponement "another Defra shambles" and accused the department of bowing to shooting interests. It said it was considering its legal options.

For more details visit: gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs



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The release of poults such as this is to be reviewed by Defra

No rush on gamebirds challenge

BASC has welcomed reassurances it has been given by Defra that it would not be rushed into implementing measures following another legal threat by Wild Justice, this one over the release of non-native gamebirds.

Wild Justice first contacted Defra about the release of gamebirds last summer and received a response in September, which acknowledged that the ecological impact of such releases needed to be assessed.

In the absence of any notification since, Wild Justice has given Defra what it calls a “firm shove” with a pre-action protocol letter to the Environment Secretary. This focuses in particular on the release of non-native

gamebirds in and around Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation.

Defra has yet to respond formally with a public statement other than Rebecca Pow, a departmental minister, saying that “it is not in its [Defra’s] view reasonable nor realistic to expect measures to be implemented before summer/autumn 2020”.

Caroline Bedell of BASC welcomed the fact that “Defra would not be bullied by threats of legal action into a knee-jerk ban on the release of gamebirds across almost half of England”.

Wild Justice said Defra could be in breach of the law if it did not act on the releases.

EVENTS

6 March

Grey squirrel control course
Glenwherry Hill Farm, Ballymena,
County Antrim, Northern Ireland

9 March

Introduction to woodpigeon shooting
West Kent Shoot School,
Paddock Wood, Kent

13 March

Country Food Trust raceday
Fakenham Racecourse,
Fakenham, Norfolk

19 March

Future of shooting, BASC members evening
Berkshire College of Agriculture,
Maidenhead, Berkshire

21 – 22 March

West of England Game Fair
Royal Bath and West Showground,
Shepton Mallet, Somerset

23 – 24 March

Holts Auction of Modern and Antique Guns
Church Farm Barns, Wolferton, Norfolk
holtsauctioneers.com

30 March – 2 April

Deer stalking Certificate 1
Thoresby Estate,
Nottinghamshire

Rural groups act on raptors

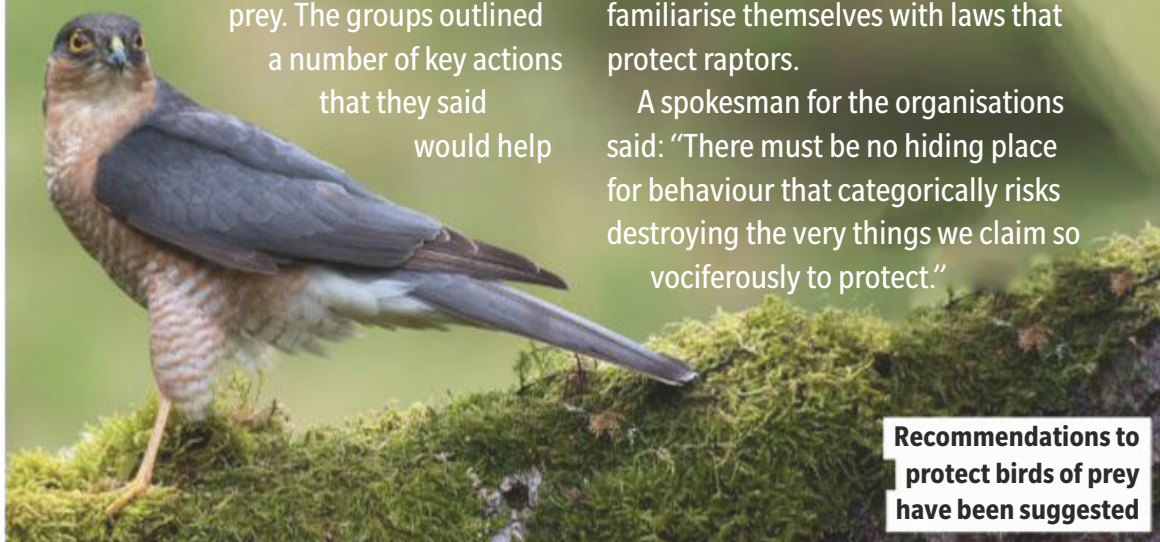
Prominent shooting and rural groups have restated their zero tolerance approach to raptor persecution.

In a recently issued joint statement, BASC, the National Gamekeepers’ Organisation, the Country Landowners’ Association and the Moorland Association reiterated their commitment to eradicating the illegal killing of birds of prey. The groups outlined a number of key actions that they said would help

eliminate the problem. These include: ensuring that interested parties such as management agents and syndicates are signed up to a zero tolerance policy towards raptor persecution; ensuring best practice is followed, with a clause prohibiting illegal activities towards raptors within a written agreement; a training course for interested parties to familiarise themselves with laws that protect raptors.

A spokesman for the organisations said: “There must be no hiding place for behaviour that categorically risks destroying the very things we claim so vociferously to protect.”

Recommendations to protect birds of prey have been suggested



RICHARD FAULKES, GETTY, SHOOTING TIMES / HENRY HUNT

NEWS IN BRIEF

Purdey winners

The Irish Grouse Conservation Trust won gold at the 2019 Purdey Awards for its work to arrest the decline of grouse on moorland at Glenwherry in County Antrim. The silver award went to the Roxburghe estate in Kelso for its grey partridge project. The bronze went to Fridlington Farms shoot in North Yorkshire for its driven teal shoot.



IGCT representatives flank Sir Nicholas Soames, centre, at the awards

NEWS IN BRIEF

A day at the races

A race meeting in aid of the Country Food Trust is to be held at Fakenham racecourse in Norfolk in support of the food poverty charity on Friday 13 March. Gates open at 11am and the first race starts at 1.35pm. The trust, which has delivered more than 500,000 game meals to people in need, thanked David Hunter, the clerk of the course, for helping to facilitate the day.

A day on the range

A new indoor rifle range has opened in Somerset. The 100m range is run by Rifleman Firearms and based near Taunton, a short drive from the M5. Mark Tutton, Rifleman's managing director, said the range was built after consultation with retired police arms response instructors and MoD personnel. Visit riflemanfirearms.com

Game for a charity shoot

The World Pheasant Association is holding two charity clay shoots in May. The first one is on 1 May at the Roundwood Estate near Micheldever, Hampshire, replete with a 160ft tower. The second at County Clays Dunkeld on Saturday 16 May.

Fausti LX competition

Congratulations to Allan Paton from Bampton who is the winner of our competition to win a Fausti LX, which was launched in the December issue. Mr Paton will be receiving his prize shortly.



Fear of 'free for all' on deer

A report has been published outlining the way deer should be managed in Scotland.

The report is a result of a review that was commissioned in 2017 and has come up with 99 recommendations. The review's remit was to ensure that deer management is compliant with the public interest and sustainable management objectives.

Recommendations include a move towards the phasing out of lead ammunition, the use of scopes for night shooting and the licensing of shotgun shooting of deer.

Most significantly, the report recommends the removal of a close season for all male deer in Scotland as well as a shorter close season for female deer. This would mean that bucks and stags could be shot all year round, a measure that has not found favour with deer managers in Scotland. The Scottish Gamekeepers' Association described it as a "free for all on an iconic Scottish species".

The Scottish government will consider the report before making recommendations on the way forward.

Cull of gulls to be limited

The National Gamekeepers' Organisation (NGO) and other shooting groups have aired concerns about a new quota system for controlling two species of gull.

Natural England is to limit the number of herring gulls and lesser black-backed gulls for which it will issue licences in rural areas this year to just 5% of their annual natural

mortality. It said culling in recent years had been "above sustainable levels".

Liam Bell, the NGO's chairman, said culling was "essential to protect the eggs and chicks of breeding birds". BASC said it had "serious reservations" about the quota feasibility.

Applications for new licences have to be submitted to Natural England by 15 March.

Ned & Ted

By Keith Reynolds



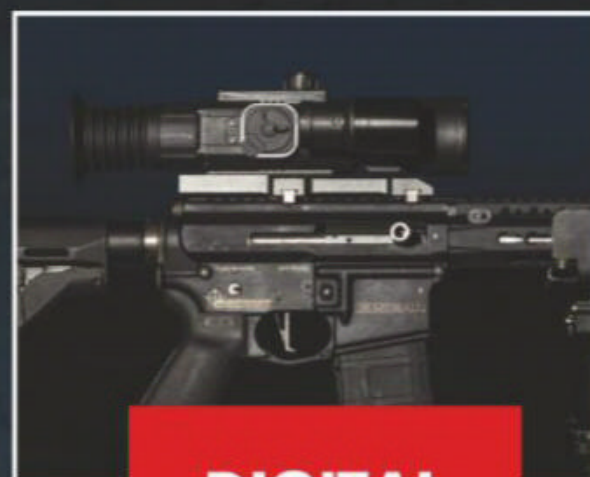


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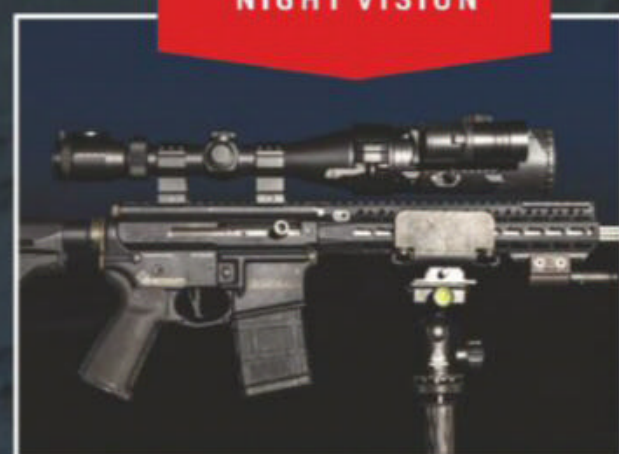


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Shooting profile

Charles Dark
in his element
on a Welsh shoot

La dolce vita

Charles Dark tells Philip Reynolds about his Italian influences – and his ambition to make a small corner of Wales a ‘must’ for sportsmen

You could be forgiven for thinking that leaving behind *la dolce vita* in Italy for the drizzle-cloaked hills of mid Wales was, well, a strange decision. To do it twice, perhaps falls into the category of needing your head testing.

Those tempted to agree with that assessment have not reckoned with the pull of the green, green grass of home. The word *hiraeth* in Welsh expresses an indefinable feeling of missing something; a longing for something from the past.

Charles Dark, owner of the Wynnstay Inn in Machynlleth, may have been brought up in the Surrey hills from seven but he is from a Welsh family, and Wales made a lasting impression. His longing was such that he decided to make his life there with his wife Sheila. He had a plan. That plan revolved around his love of good food and wine, allied to a passion for the sporting life. Besides, Wales is beautiful, too, if not quite so climatically favoured.

Charles discovered shooting towards the end of his school years in the late 1960s. His friends used to visit his home in Surrey with their muzzleloaders, no doubt high up on many schoolboys’ wish lists. His first serious experience of shooting was on a relative’s

farm in Dolgellau, where he spent holidays.

As with his friends in the Surrey hills, this was old school shooting, with hammerguns. Charles describes it as a touch of “*le longue carabine*”, Hawkeye-style in *The Last of the Mohicans*.

He progressed to a side-by-side, which he still shoots – a BSA. A “gentleman’s gun”, as he calls it. “It has always been side-by-sides. They just feel comfortable. They are lighter than other guns and do the job.”

“A good day’s shooting then back to a damn good fire and a pint”

Italian job

It was Charles’ Italian ‘job’, or more accurately his wife Sheila’s, that came before the shooting and Wales. The couple met while pursuing their careers in advertising and marketing in London in the 1970s, and Charles followed Sheila out to Milan. It was here they made the good life for themselves and raised their son Bertie.

It was in Milan that Charles nurtured his love of Italian cuisine and wine, something that can be enjoyed at the Wynnstay today.

He has spent half of his adult life in Italy and can speak the language fluently. Whisper it, but a lot better than he can speak Welsh.

One aspect of Italian life that Charles didn’t altogether take to was the way they go about their shooting, though he concedes they “make fantastic guns”. He said that when shooting game an Italian party, which usually numbers around 20, surrounds an area of woodland in 4x4s and then sends the dogs in. He said this approach led to a

number of confrontations with people and animals making incursions onto his land.

Towards the end of the 1990s Charles and Sheila decided to return to the UK and were going to buy a pub in his childhood home of the Surrey hills, but that fell through and it was then the chance to purchase the Wynnstay “popped up”. If Machynlleth was good enough for Owain Glyndwr to hold a parliament for Wales, it was good enough for Charles and Sheila.

Taking on an 18th century coaching inn

was, however, no mean task. “We did not know the hotel business but we understood marketing,” he says.

They must have done something right as over the ensuing nine years from when they bought the Wynnstay in 1998, Charles and Sheila built up the business and doubled the turnover. It was during this period that he started to shoot properly and make sporting connections in the community, least not with the Jones family, who now run the Dovey Valley Shooting Ground nearby. Charles obtained his shotgun licence and enjoyed his shooting, including visiting shooting shows across the border when the opportunity presented itself.

Lure of Liguria

However, in 2003, the lure of Liguria proved irresistible and Charles and Sheila returned to Italy, selling the Wynnstay to a member of staff, though they kept an interest. The sale didn’t work out and they returned to Wales in 2016, repurchasing the Wynnstay, taking a considerable financial hit in the process.

At least their second sojourn in Italy allowed Charles to develop his wine business, something which customers of the Wynnstay enjoy the fruits of today. The coaching inn serves many boutique Italian wines that are not widely available on the open market. The return to Machynlleth also saw Charles re-establish contact with the sporting community in the area, which is now a cornerstone of his business. Charles’ good relationships with a few shoots provide an enticing package for those prepared to venture to mid Wales.

Connections

His friendship with Richard Jones of Dovey Valley can provide visitors with a comprehensive package of clay shooting while staying at the Wynnstay. The same can be said for his connection with a few shoots, all of which are developing.

Charles does not organise the shooting



There’s a warm welcome at the Wynnstay

More information

- Wynnstay Hotel, Machynlleth, Powys, SY20 8AE
- Tel: 01654 702941 or
- visit: wynnstay.wales
- charlesdark@mac.com

through the hotel, as that would have complex insurance implications. However, because of his relationships, he can point people who want to shoot in the right direction. It is a reciprocal arrangement and the quid pro quo for Charles acting as an informal facilitator is that they lodge at the Wynnstay.

Charles’ aim is for the Wynnstay to become the destination of choice for sportsmen and women shooting or fishing in the area.

If you want value for money for a day in the field, you could do a lot worse than looking at what is on offer. Within 20 minutes’ drive of the Wynnstay there are three shoots as well as the shooting ground. There are driven days available with pheasant and woodcock; another with duck, snipe and teal as well.

So far on one of the shoots there have been a limited number of birds, but next season the owner is planning on at least 7,000. All this for £200 to £250 per Gun, per day. There is room for up to 11 Guns on the largest shoot and Charles has bought three pegs. Shooting is always on a Saturday, once a fortnight in November and December and every Saturday in January.

If clays are your thing, Richard Jones at Dovey Valley will see you right most days of the year, in all winds and weathers and for all abilities. And for those who like to fish, there are five sea trout rivers and six lakes nearby, with day permits available for most.

Charles’ vision is well on the way to fruition. He wants people to know that be it Dovey Valley or the shoots, it’s something special and “worth the journey”.

A good day’s shooting then back to the Wynnstay for a “damn good fire and a pint of real ale, good wine list and convivial atmosphere”, not to mention a menu of fine local food. That doesn’t sound like too much of a hardship. *La dolce vita*, indeed. ■



Casks of Italian wine tempt the visitor



There is plenty of good shooting to be found nearby



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Here we go again

Robin Scott hopes it won't be a case of déjà vu in the continuing saga of the general licences

Cast your mind back to this time last year. Remember what happened? Of course you do. Who could possibly forget? Campaign group Wild Justice brought pigeon and crow control to a shuddering halt.

In one fell swoop, pigeon shooting stopped and corvid traps were removed. Any live crow and magpie decoys were either set

free or transferred to aviaries. Shooters and gamekeepers, law-abiding as ever, complied. Looking back, what fools we were.

All this came about because Wild Justice threatened legal action against Natural England and challenged the legality of the general licences, under which we had been controlling pest birds for many years. The licences were revoked and chaos ensued.

Damage

The job of administering the general licences was, after a period of hand-wringing, taken over by Defra, which made changes that allowed shooting and trapping to resume. But the damage had been done.

It took weeks to sort out the terrible mess, during which time carrion crows and magpies helped themselves to endangered curlew and lapwing eggs and chicks with gay abandon. Other ground-nesting waders suffered. Songbirds, too. Newborn lambs had their eyes pecked and died. We shooters had to sit on our hands, helpless. Gamekeepers, shepherds and farmers looked on in disbelief. The countryside was in uproar.

All this happened because a self-proclaimed band of bird lovers had thrown a spanner into the works at the worst possible moment. Their timing had been planned perfectly for maximum effect and media exposure. But it backfired: the majority of the press and non-shooting public were horrified by what had happened and Wild Justice was vilified in many quarters.

Unacceptable

But don't believe the same thing couldn't happen this summer and our worst fears realised again. We are only nearing the end of February as I write, but Wild Justice is once more primed for a legal challenge to the licences, in spite of the carnage it helped to cause in the countryside last spring.

Not only does it want the licences cancelled in their current form but its demands could see every shooter and pest controller in England having to apply for an individual permit.

Defra has temporarily reissued six general licences for England that had been due to



RICHARD FALKS, ALAMY

Lapwings were left vulnerable to predation

expire at the end of February (see News, page 6) which will run until 31 July, with the new licences taking effect on 1 August.

This should mean there is no interruption to the protection of nesting birds and lambs during the critical spring period unless Wild Justice manages to win an injunction.

In a statement made at the time of the extension, outgoing environment secretary Theresa Villiers said: “We are working intensively on delivering a robust licensing system for the future which balances the different interests at stake in a fair way.

“We need to ensure we have carefully considered all the relevant evidence.”

The uncertainty of the situation is all Defra’s making. It consulted widely on the issue, promising a decision soon after the December 5 closing date for submissions.

Wild Justice said budget cuts to Defra is one cause of the ‘shambles’ and has accused it of being “unable to think through the issues”. The pressure group said: “If, after a year, Defra cannot issue good general licences, then they should not issue bad general licences.”

A more likely explanation for this exasperating delay is the general election held in mid-December and the pressing issue of Brexit.

But what if the new licences issued in August, are substantially watered down? What if Wild Justice wins an injunction, halting either the temporary licences or the new ones? Where will that leave shooters, gamekeepers and land managers?



“An extension of 12 months seems eminently sensible”

Legally, it means we would have to leave our guns in the cabinet and the doors to our cages bolted shut again until a solution is found. Wild Justice would have achieved its aim to stop what it sees as “the casual and unlawful killing of birds”. However, with public sympathy very much on the side of farmers and pest controllers, maybe this time any ban

would be widely ignored. If these are ‘bad licences’, then why should we adhere to them? To do so would put wildlife at risk. I, for one, would be in no hurry to shut down my traps.

As for applying for individual licences – what a joke! Wild Justice knows it would take months to process and issue the necessary paperwork. So long, in fact, some permits would probably still be going through the system this time next year when the whole charade would be played out yet again.

Almost all the shooters I’ve listened to on this agree that if the general licences (a legacy of the EU’s Bird Directive from the 1970s) are not fit for purpose, they should be replaced. And what better time than now? Brexit has created an opportunity for us to do just that.

Individual licences? We already have them. They’re called shotgun and firearm certificates. ■



Peter Theobald delights that he is still learning about the ways of the wily woodie after 50 years

The ultimate quarry



When I wrote my book *The Woodpigeon: The Ultimate Quarry* 25 years ago, people would often ask me why I deemed the humble woody to be a superior quarry to all the other species available to sportsmen in the UK.

Surely a cock pheasant slipping sideways on a strong crosswind, having launched itself from 150ft up a Welsh mountain, or a late-season grouse hurtling around the contours of a Scottish moor, would present a far greater challenge for the average Gun?

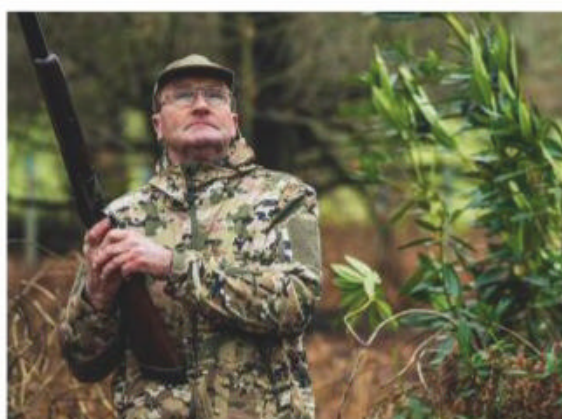
The fact is, the skills you need to acquire to deal with the aforementioned game birds can be learned relatively quickly; all you need is a good coach and deep pockets. To become proficient at killing pigeons can take a lifetime, hence, at 68, with 50 years of practice behind me, I am still learning.

Stick a good game shooter in a pigeon hide for the first time and it will very likely be

a humbling experience for him, as the birds twist and turn in a way that no other bird can. If you can hit pigeons consistently, you can deal with any bird that flies.

Admiration

My admiration for the woodpigeon goes beyond the skill required to put it in the bag, as, with every arable farmer's hand against it, its numbers continue to thrive, despite the



Peter Theobald surveys the woods for roosting pigeons

best efforts of us decoyers. What really gets my juices flowing is the challenge to pit my wits against the survival instincts of our most prolific pest species (a conservative estimate of numbers is five million).

On a game shoot, all that is required of you is to connect with whatever passes at a safe and sporting range, the keeper and landowner having done all the hard work. I enjoy standing on the peg as much as the next man, but it is nothing compared to the expectation of a big day at pigeons. My input on a game day revolves around me shooting straight, whereas, to achieve a decent bag of pigeons might involve days, or sometimes weeks of meticulous planning.

First, a likely field must be identified (obviously on a farm where you have permission to shoot), and then numbers of birds need to be monitored. Do we need to act quickly, for example, on drillings where the food supply might disappear in a day or

Peter Theobald and
Paul Payne wait
patiently in the hide



two, or can we let numbers build, as might be the case on stubbles? You also have to factor in the concerns of the farmer, who may not be happy to let the birds ravage his crops, just so you can have a big day.

Then, can we wait for the perfect weather conditions: overcast with a decent wind and no rain? Or must we act soon, for fear of the pigeons finding something more to their liking closer to home? All this adds to the excitement when all the pieces of the puzzle fall into place, unlike a commercial 200-bird partridge shoot, where, by and large, you will get somewhere close to that number.

Unforeseen

Even when everything seems in place for a good day's decoying, the unforeseen can throw a spanner in the works. We once turned up to shoot rape stubble, expecting a 200-plus outing, only to see a contractor spreading chalk amid a cloud of dust,

“The birds twist and turn in a way that no other bird can”

detering any pigeons from even entering the field. Fortunately, the birds were so keen on that particular field they piled in to feed as soon as the machine left and we achieved what we had hoped.

On other occasions we have arrived to shoot only to find another decoyer set up. Provided he has permission from the landowner, you have to take this on the chin and head elsewhere. Sometimes a quick chat with the other decoyer can reveal another spot on the field where both parties could benefit, but it must always be at his discretion; after all, first come, first served.

While pigeon shooting is often described as a 'lone wolf' sport, partnering with a like-minded person can increase the chances of making a decent bag. The problem is finding someone who shares your passion and has the knowledge to contribute to the outcome.

I was lucky nine years ago to meet Paul Payne, who bought a day's pigeon shooting with me at an auction organised by BASC. It was soon obvious how much we had in common in the way we went about our shooting. Our paths had never crossed even though he only lived 15 miles away. We have since shared hundreds of days and I think we would both agree we have shot more pigeons as a result of our partnership.

We have pooled our knowledge and the farms over which we have permission, and it is rare indeed that we disagree on how to shoot a particular situation as we continue our education of this remarkable bird, truly the 'ultimate quarry'. ■

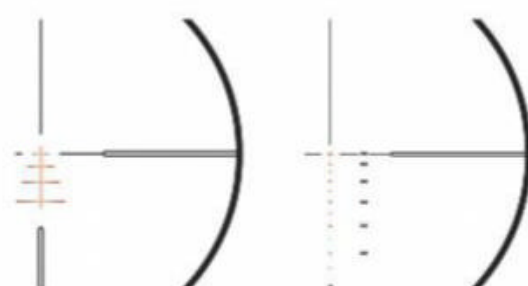
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A chance for the beaters to enjoy some shooting

Hard days' flight

Gamekeeper **Adam Cope** treated his helpers to a day on the peg for all their hard work over the year. Richard Faulks was there to watch proceedings

Why have a beaters' day? It's a time-honoured tradition to say thank you to all the people who make a shoot day possible.

Guns often overlook just how much work and organisation goes into putting on a successful day. Just release the birds, feed them occasionally and walk through a cover crop to fly them over the line. How hard can it be?

Anybody who knows a gamekeeper or has helped around a shoot will know it's a year round, full-time job, and it is more than one person can manage on their own on a

shoot of any size. Having a knowledgeable, committed and reliable team of helpers is essential, and the majority of the work they do is done for the love of the sport.

A few perks can help greatly when it comes to keeping your helpers happy. Perhaps access to pigeon shooting, ferreting, and foxing will keep them keen, and some are happy to get the opportunity to work their dogs, but everybody seems to look forward to beaters' day the most.

As seasons go, this season has been particularly successful on Taylor's Farm, despite the miserable weather. Adam Cope (the gamekeeper) has managed to smash

the shoot record, and pretty much every day they've shot has produced a better than average bag. The syndicate was happy and there were plenty of birds left after the penultimate day of the syndicate's season.

Adam is always keen to put on a good show for the beaters on their day, so it was decided to move it forward to the middle of January before the syndicate's final day and a small let day at end of the month.

This would ensure a good show of birds for the beaters, and as shoot captain David Firth said: "If we turn up on the final syndicate day and only shoot 100, so be it; we've had some very, very good days this season." »

A successful beaters' day at Taylor's Farm

Beaters' day

The plan for the day was to have 12 standing Guns, a few walking Guns and everybody else beating or picking-up. David Firth agreed to help place the Guns on their pegs and Crockett to get people to where they need to be in the Gator.

Wily birds

David was the perfect man to have placing the Guns because that's what he does all season with the syndicate, and Crockett helps with all aspects of the shoot and knows his way around it like the back of his hand.

David and Adam spent time working out which drives would be worth doing and how to catch up with some of the more wily birds



Yan looks forward to a change of roles

that have learned to slip out of the drives. I joined Liz Conway, who helps with 'dogging in', on Hollow Back drive. It turned out this was her first experience shooting game. She is a keen clay shooter and shoots regularly with the Shotgun and Chelsea Bun Club and uses her favourite Yildiz 20-bore side-by-side for clays – and now for game.

Hollow Back is perhaps the best drive at Taylor's Farm and Liz had drawn peg five, which is pretty much the best peg. No pressure then, in her first time in the line, with a photographer standing behind her.

Not even this put her off her stride and she told me after the drive: "I always said I'd only shoot clays, until today, and I shot two birds. It's very different to shooting clays; they're not a set target and they go whichever way they go – you don't know when they're going to go and you don't get four shots at them.

"I really enjoyed it. It was better than I expected and I'll certainly do it again. My son Will, who's a gamekeeper, can now take me out on the odd day."

Experiment

With the pressure of getting the bag for paying guests now off, Adam and David decided to run through a strip of cover



Alfie Johnson clearly enjoying his day helping out

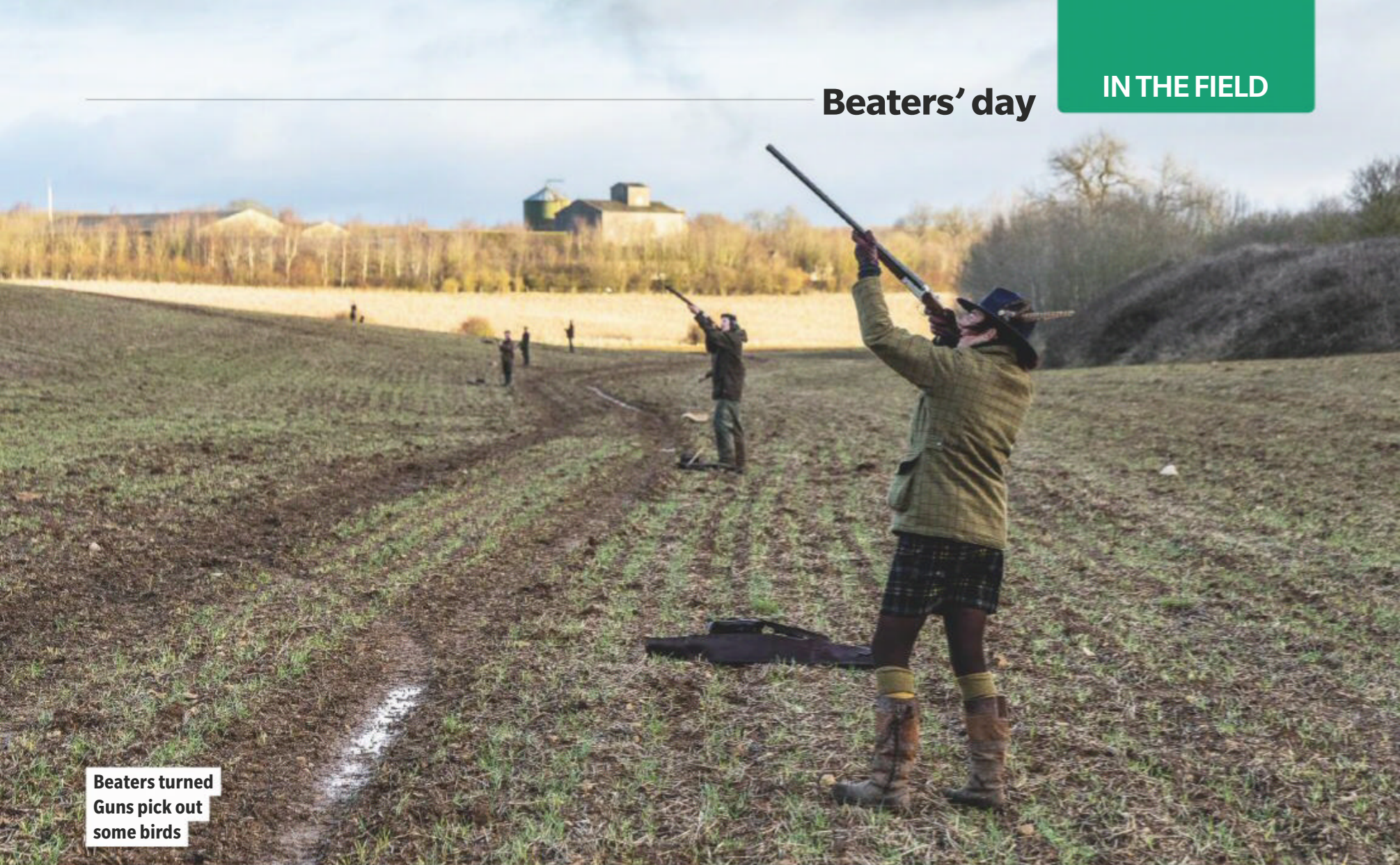
that hadn't been shot all season. One real advantage of a day like this is that Adam can experiment, something he can't really do on a normal shoot day in case it all goes to pot and you have to do an extra drive.

The strip is on the edge of the shoot and is usually used for blanking birds into Hollow Back drive. Adam met a dog walker early on the morning of the shoot and the



The new Guns listen attentively at the shoot briefing

A bright clear start to the annual beaters' day



Beaters turned
Guns pick out
some birds

“The plan was to catch up with some of the more wily birds”

disturbance had definitely pushed birds that way. It had reduced the number of birds for the Hollow Back drive, although it still went well for a mid-January day. But every cloud has a silver lining, and knowing there were birds there allowed Adam to try the strip as a drive. It went better than expected and perhaps can be used next season. If he hadn't walked it through, he wouldn't have known.

Adam and Crockett had been out a couple of days before and managed to shoot a fallow deer, which Crockett had butchered and made into a venison pie, much appreciated by the team.

At lunch Crockett told me: “It's nice that Adam has thought of the beaters and put the day in mid-January rather than giving the beaters the ‘scrapings’ at the end of the season. He needs recognition for that.”

Crockett spent the morning helping with the beating and Gun line and said: “I've been ‘bitting and bobbing’. If I found a gap I filled

it and I've had a bit of shooting. It's not what you shoot though, it's the people you shoot with, and it's been a great day so far and they're a great bunch of people.”

Fowl play

Two drives, including duck, were planned after lunch. Two hundred ducks had been put down in the moat of Woodhead Castle at the start of the season and had been saved for the beaters but they didn't want to play ball. Adam had been flying them for a few weeks and they had returned to the pond within minutes. Most of them hadn't read the script and decided to head off into the distance.

I caught up with David at the end of the day to get his thoughts on how he thought it had gone. “There was plenty of shooting and the bag ended up at 125, which is very good,” he said.

He must have been in a good mood as he put £100 behind the bar at the local for



Chris Hope takes a retrieved pheasant

everybody to have a drink. He shared the sentiments of one of the Guns: “It's not as easy as it looks but we all had fun.”

As for Adam, a view from the sharp end: “It's been a tough season for beating – there have been lots of wet days in muddy wet terrain, so it's good to show a bit of appreciation. We put in some long hours, so they've earned it.”

Crockett arranged a whip-round for beaters but was amazed to find they had offered to give Adam a tip for having them along. That's why you have a beaters' day. ■



IN THE FIELD

Ratting

The art of 'war'

Nick Ridley tells of his admiration at seeing teams of terriers in full flow on ratting missions



One of the dogs
carries off
a very dead rat

NICK RIDLEY



A bale is pulled open to expose the rats' nest

There is no doubt that the brown rat is one of nature's success stories. It is equally at home in the biggest of cities or the most rural parts of the countryside. It will take advantage of any food source and it is the carrier of some potentially deadly infections such as Weil's disease and murine typhus, as well as salmonella, parasites, viruses and worms.

Rattus norvegicus has been a resident in the UK since the early 18th century and has now almost completely displaced its smaller cousin *Rattus rattus*, the black rat, in the UK.

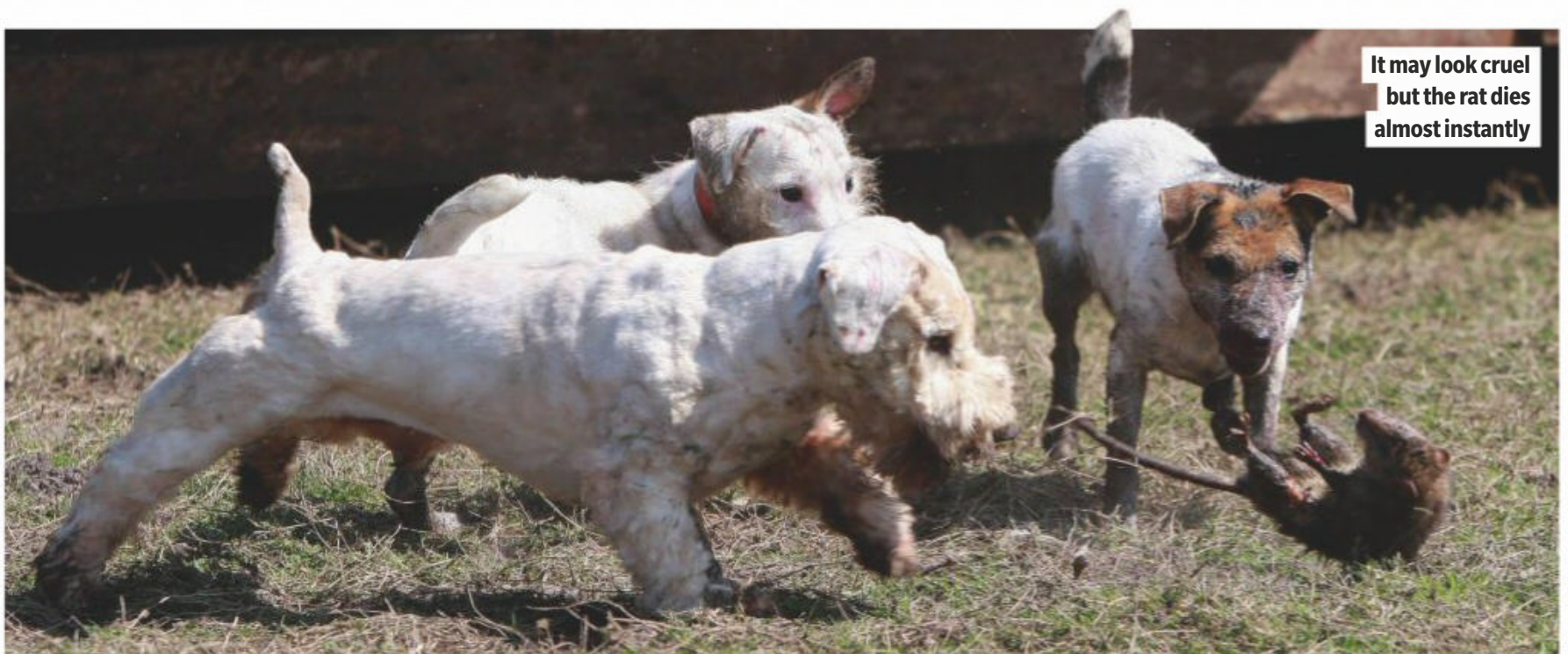
It is said that wherever you live you are only ever a few feet away from a rat. They breed all year and a female is able to reproduce from six weeks, having up to six litters in a year with an average of eight pups. It doesn't take long for numbers to get out of hand.

Control

Methods of control are varied – shooting, trapping, poisoning and hunting with dogs. Rats are one of the few mammals that can still be hunted legally by dogs, and to many it is the most humane way of dealing with

the pest; an excited shake by a hot-blooded terrier and the rat dies instantly. This way there is no chance of secondary poisoning, no chance of injury from a misplaced shot; it either gets away or it's caught and dies. I have never owned a terrier but over the years I have had the chance to watch some very good ones ply their trade.

I clearly remember the expectation the first time I had the chance to go ratting. Scout was a smart looking rough-coated Jack Russell and his owner Ben had been asked to clear out a garden shed of some



It may look cruel but the rat dies almost instantly



A terrier snatches a rat trying to flee from a straw bale

“An excited shake by a hot-blooded terrier and the rat dies instantly”

unwanted visitors. The owner of the house also had some chickens and, as I have learned from personal experience, if you have chickens you will inevitably have rats.

Ben used an old chainsaw to pump smoke down the numerous holes and by the end of the morning a couple of rats lay dead on the floor. I have to admit that it was great fun and although the bag was very modest, the house owner was pleased with the result.

Hell

The following year, at the end of the shooting season, I had another invitation to photograph a team of dogs and handlers attempting to reduce a large population of rats that had taken up residence in some game cover crops and straw bales used as windbreaks.

This was a different ball game altogether. The team decided to tip every other bale over by hand and I had to steel myself, as I wanted to get some eye-level shots which meant I would be in the middle of bolting rats and chasing terriers.

As the first bale went over all hell was let loose as rats ran everywhere, hotly pursued by the dogs. I'm not sure how many came out of the first bale, but many escaped by running to the next one along the line. It was then the strategy became clear. By tipping

over every other bale, the ones left standing became a 'rat trap' and ensured plenty of work for the dogs when they were moved.

It can look a bit brutal watching dogs ratting but be under no illusion, the rats die instantly – a quick shake and it was all over; the dogs really knew their job. Even after the first set of bales had been finished, the dogs got to work marking the holes the rats had made, and as a couple of lads got to work with a spade, rats started to bolt from under the ground. I am sure we could have spent all



A happy terrier surrounded by some of its kills



Rats try to hide from the attacking dogs

day digging and smoking out rats from under the first set of bales, but time was drawing on and there was another line of bales that needed doing before calling it a day. The tally kept growing and it wasn't long before the magic 100 came up, and we still had half the row to tip. We ended up with 151 rats and we could have easily gone to well over 200.

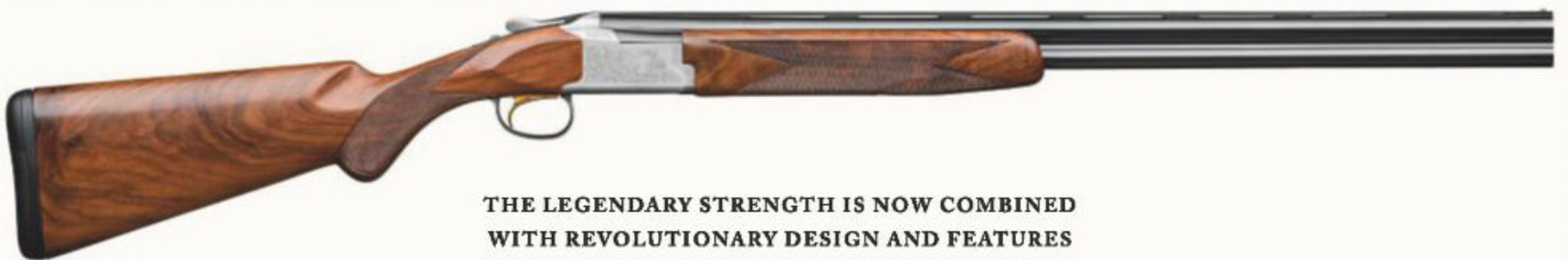
The highlight of my limited 'ratting career' came a couple of years ago when I had the chance to witness what must be the pinnacle of controlling rats with dogs.

I was invited down to Devon for a day out with a pack of terriers and their handlers. To say things were frantic, hectic and very dirty would be an understatement. I have never seen so many rats in one place – it was crawling with them. In just four hours over 350 rats had been accounted for and had the dogs not been so exhausted I am sure the figure might have been significantly higher.

It was an impressive display of efficient pest control and one that I am sure will be repeated throughout the country, as the continuous battle with the old adversary shows no sign of abating. ■

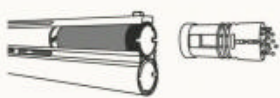
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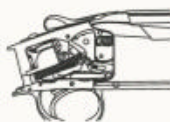


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Woodland wander-land

Tom Sykes has an afternoon potter around the estate and makes a start on corvid control

The shooting season seems to have flown by. It has been the fastest season to date for me and it barely seems any time since we were releasing pheasants on the shoot. A few epic keepers' days marked the end of another fantastic winter in the field. Charlie and I have had a great season and managed to see our fair share of action from the peg and on the wilds of the foreshore.

The last few weeks of the game season saw us out practically every day, which left Goose and Hugo ready for a few days off. Being a wildfowler, I had the extension of 20 days on the foreshore, which again seemed to be a mad rush towards the end to ensure I stocked the freezer for the summer months. I had all the shooting I could do without regretting missed chances and the waders are now cleaned and stored for another year.

During the winter months the crows have been left in peace to avoid disturbing the pheasant shoot on rest days. But now the game shoots have fallen silent it's time to get stuck into the corvid population. They seemed to have regrouped over winter and there are plenty to get on top of before they start causing trouble around the farms and on the shoot. In these late winter days I always like to have a mooch on the ground and try to set up an ambush in the roost sites.

Big gang

First, the estate gamekeepers organised a large roost shoot, the highlight of most of the beater's diaries shortly after the pheasant season. The keepers spread the Guns out throughout the roosting wood to set an ambush for the unsuspecting jackdaws and crows.

The large gang of Guns kept the birds on the move, producing some fast and

Ready for action, watching for movement in the trees



Tom keeps a lookout for the next bird



SYKES MEDIA

SYKES MEDIA
 furious shooting during the twilight hours. The night accounted for a good number of early spring crows, which is a great pest control method as it hits the birds before they have bred. Although this was a fantastic night's shooting, I like the laid-back approach of heading out on my own for a potter in the woods to see what I can bag.

I decided to head up to the estate one afternoon in the last hours of daylight. I pulled off the main road and drove down the rubble track down to the tarn area, the most productive roost sight on the estate. I used the woodland canopy to conceal the truck from any quarry and before heading through the woods, I threw on my camouflage jacket,

tipped a couple of boxes of shells in my pocket and loaded my old-school Winchester pump action. This set-up of having a pocket full of shells and a gun slung on your back allows you to move around freely to find targets along the way.

In position

I reached a clearing in the wood and decided to stand quietly and let everything settle down. It wasn't long until I could hear the distance hoots of a wood pigeon. A black flash appeared above my head but soon vanished.

I wandered a little further into a bigger clearing, which gave me a better chance of spotting approaching birds. After a short wait, I saw the first rook cruising my way. I remained still to conceal my position as it continued on its line, heading slightly right of my position.

A last-second flick of the gun downed the first bird of the evening. I cycled the gun and slipped another cartridge into the magazine before navigating through the small trees to retrieve the downed bird and returned to my position. Following a considerable wait, I decided to walk further up the wood to try to find another bird or two.



Another round goes in the chamber to keep topped up



“The crows have regrouped over winter and there are plenty to get on top of”

I could hear the calls of a lone rook in the treetops not far from my position, which gave me the opportunity to stalk my way closer for a shot. I crept through the trees and scanned each branch for that distinctive black silhouette. I locked onto the culprit and exposed my position to make the bird take flight. Another swift shot from the pump-action resulted in a second bird in the bag.

One more go

The afternoon continued to be relatively quiet with only the fleeting chance of a crow. As darkness fell, I made my way round the last loop of woodland where a squirrel



Three rooks that won't be bothering the farmer any more

managed to evade capture as it slipped around the back of a tree.

When I made it onto the ride, which led back to the truck, the last chance of a rook presented itself. As a small squadron flew over, the first shot found its mark but two follow-up shots could not catch up with their erratic flight pattern.

I arrived back at the truck with three birds in the bag. After a quick slurp of coffee I headed off to the main jackdaw roost for the last hour of light. This ended up being significantly more productive, with a total bag count well into double figures. Slower paced shooting like this is a great way to unwind after such a hectic time of year. ■

Tom get his sights on a roosting rook

A spaniel searches
for the deer's
scent trail



Dogs and myths spun

Jon Snowdon addresses the misapprehension about the role of the stalking dog that many people seem to have

JON SNOWDON, PAUL QUAGLIANA

Over the past few months I have had cause to talk to people about dogs that are used for hunting, and many betrayed a misunderstanding of what they do. Most were also of the opinion that they must be vicious.

One would like to think that at least those living in the countryside would understand the working dog. On the whole it is those who do not have any link to the country that demonstrate a lack of understanding, often a prejudice and even fear of the working hunting dog.

It is not the working dogs that we read about attacking people, it is the bored family pet kept in the wrong environment, frustrated because it is unable to exercise or demonstrate the skills that centuries of breeding have produced.

Andrea, the boss, was at her wool-spinning group recently. I call it the coven and believe they meet to spin our fate, just as the Norns did with the roots of Yggdrasil, the tree of life in Nordic mythology. In

truth, they are a great group of people practising and educating to keep an old and skilled craft alive.

A comment made on a visit was the belief that we have our dogs to hunt and run down quarry and that we enjoy that. It is a misunderstanding that I hear all too often and it seems to be the opinion of many who do not work in the countryside or shoot. It is also part of the negative information, call it spin, which comes out of the anti-shooting community. Unfortunately, too many people believe that claptrap.

The hunter's task

The deer manager's dog is used in specific circumstances where a deer may run immediately after the shot to be lost in cover. Often deer will run some metres before succumbing to the loss of blood pressure. On very rare occasions it may mean the animal is

Tasks in hand

April is the start of the roebuck season and as always we will be ready, catching up with youngsters before the more mature boys chase them out. It is also a good time to see what's around, and where. There may be the odd big buck around and you decide that it's time to remove them – fate being on your side, of course. The large mature bucks are very likely to be out of velvet whereas younger bucks may still keep their velvet antler covering into May.

wounded. When the animal is lost from sight a hunter has one of two choices: the first action, once the rifle has been reloaded, is to go to the area where the deer was shot and look carefully for any signs resulting from the shot. Also, a deer's reaction to a shot can convey to the hunter where the shot is likely to have impacted and whether it was a humane despatch or not.

The result from a shot that any hunter really wants to see is the deer dropping to the ground in view. However, if the deer manages to run into cover, then it has to be followed up.

This is when the stalker searches the shot sight for any blood spoor or any other signs that may be seen. This can tell us where the animal has been hit and how we can proceed.

These are clear indicators:

- A** Bright blood is usually the result of a heart shot;
- B** Bright frothy blood usually indicates a heart/lung or just a lung shot;
- C** Very dark thick red blood is often a liver shot;
- D** Green content, the sign none of us want to see, is a gut shot;
- A, B** and **C** tell the hunter the animal is dead and probably only a few metres away.
- D** however, is a totally different scenario and the hunter's action on follow-up will be different.

I will not go into the follow-up procedures on any of the above this month. That is for another time. The important



Bright blood may indicate a heart shot, unless frothy, which suggests a lung hit

thing is that we follow up on every deer shot that has gone out of sight and do not presume we missed it just because it managed move off and get into cover. Following a blood spoor can be challenging in thick woodland or areas of cover such as bracken. Often the spoor runs out before the animal drops to the ground dead. In some cases, the carcass may be lost.

Bring the dog in

This scenario is when a trained dog really comes into its own. As I have said previously, the trained dog can, and often does, make utter fools of the hunter's tracking expertise.

A trained blood-scenting dog will usually follow the scent straight to the carcass, even when there is no visible trail to the hunter. In some cases good dogs don't even have to follow the trail; they will simply scent the carcass »



Lining up a buck whose time has come

from a distance, wherever it fell, and go straight to it.

Dogs I have trained have, and I do not exaggerate, scented a carcass from hundreds of metres away and headed straight to it. I have often called on my dog to find the carcass rather than attempt to follow a trail, it's much quicker.

The scent dog used by a hunter is never used to chase down and kill a deer. That is the method of a poacher and it is an appalling practice that is abhorrent to all right-thinking people. The hunter stalks a deer and shoots it as humanely as possible. On the whole it all goes to plan but on rare occasions a deer is wounded.

Some dogs, when they are sent on a trail and find the animal alive, hold it until the hunter arrives. Others may kill it. Alfie and Patch would do so by holding the deer's neck, often breaking it.

I can think of three or four times in 30 years when this happened. The important point is that the shot deer is found and despatched as quickly and humanely as is possible. That is a legal requirement.

As to the view that hunting dogs are

“The scent dog used by a hunter is never used to chase down and kill a deer”

Ingredients

- 8 slices of aubergine, ½in thick
- Salt
- 1lb venison chopped
- 1 onion, skinned and chopped
- 4 tbsp chopped parsley
- Paprika
- 4 tbsp tomato puree
- 2 tbsp water

Method

Preheat the oven to 150°C
Salt the aubergine slices and leave in a colander to drain. Mix the meat with the onion and parsley and season with the salt and paprika. Spread some of this mixture on each slice of aubergine and arrange them in a well-greased ovenproof dish. Mix the tomato purée and water and pour over the aubergine slices. Bake in the centre of the oven for 1 hour. Put under a hot grill to brown before serving. Garnish with parsley and serve on a bed of mashed potato.

ANDREA'S RECIPE

Aubergines and venison

A warming, flavoursome dish

That's your Lotte!



Lottie's training has started young

This little treasure has more attitude than I have ever seen in such a small package. She has boundless energy and even at 10 weeks is using her nose to find things – not the stuff I want her to find, but she is just a pup. For one with such little legs she can go like the clappers. I am not sure this bodes well. It is too soon to train her but already on her first sight of a deer foot she wasn't keen to let it go.

vicious, those of us who use a working dog know otherwise. None of my dogs have ever been aggressive to humans, adults or children. They could be played with and enjoyed a real rough and tumble. I remember a stalking colleague who brought an 18-month-old child in a pushchair to the Game Fair to say hello on the *Sporting Gun* stand. The child and Alfie studiously stared at each other for a while before the child opened its arms wide and Alfie placed his head on the child's shoulder, resulting in a huge cuddle, much to the pleasure of both parties. Using a dog's natural ability is an old tradition going back millennia and we would be lost without it. People who say otherwise are simply wrong. ■

A dog bounds over to check a downed deer



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Charles Smith-Jones trains his sights on an animal whose fortunes have fluctuated over the centuries

Roe deer

Capreolus capreolus

To many, the roe is the most delightful of our deer. Small, graceful and immaculate in its foxy red summer coat, it has adapted to live not just in the deciduous woodland it prefers but habitats as varied as the open hill of the Highlands, the grass-covered downland of southern England and even the urban fringe. Today, with the exceptions of some parts of Wales and the Midlands and the southeastern tip of England, the chances are that in mainland Britain you will never be far from one.

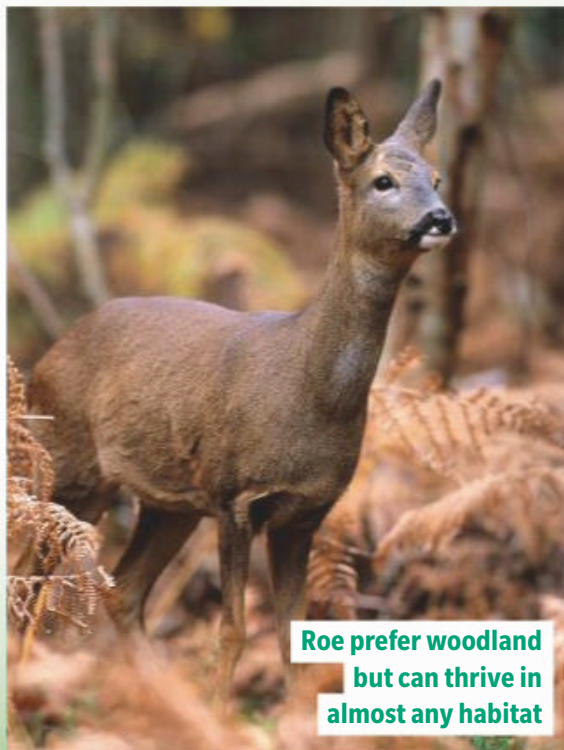
Fall and rise

This has not always been the case and, over the past few centuries, the roe has experienced mixed fortunes. During the Middle Ages when the red stag was the most highly regarded beast of the chase, the roe ranked below the hare. By the 18th century, while it hung on in its Scottish strongholds, the roe was all but extinct in much of England and reintroductions were made with animals from north of the border or Europe.

Matters started to change radically about a century ago when World War I created a huge demand for timber, and the secondary growth that followed large-scale tree

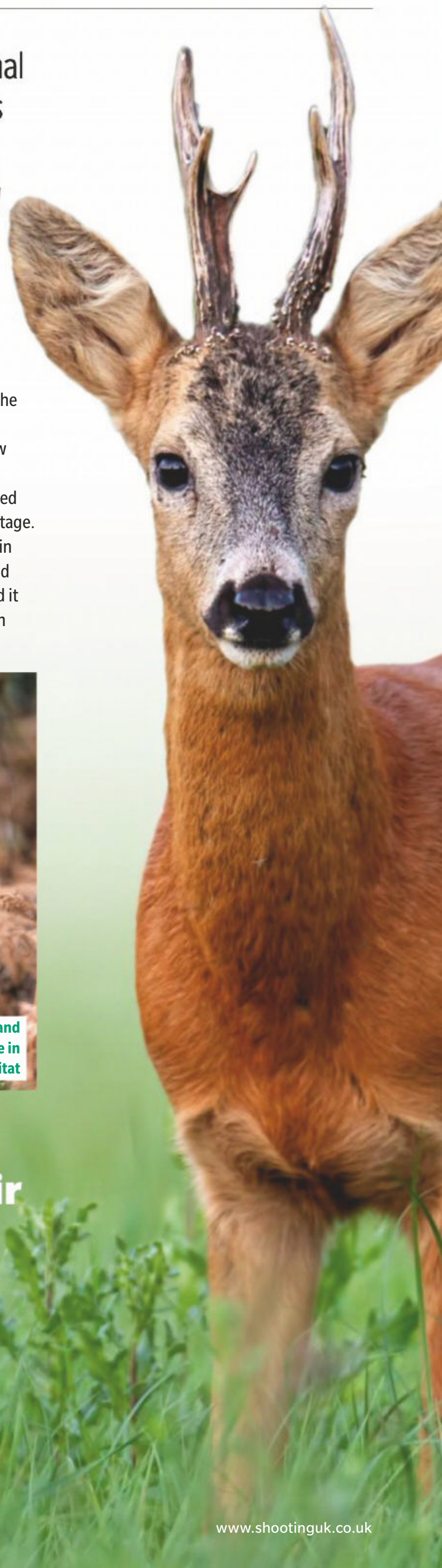
clearances created perfect roe habitat. The formation of the Forestry Commission in 1919 created yet more huge areas of new plantation that were quickly colonised.

Even more large-scale planting followed World War II, and the roe took full advantage. By the 1970s it was starting to reappear in the parts of central and southern England where it had long been absent. In Ireland it has never been present naturally, though there were short-lived introductions in



Roe prefer woodland but can thrive in almost any habitat

“Kids are born at a favourable time of year that enhances their chances of survival”



County Sligo, while other illegal, unlicensed ones are still rumoured today.

Gestation

One phenomenon that distinguishes the roe from all other deer is delayed implantation. The fertilised egg does not implant into the uterus wall immediately after mating. Instead, it floats free within the uterus for months before implantation takes place and the foetus starts to develop normally. Implantation of the fertilised egg does not occur until December or early January, with kids being born towards the end of May.

This is despite the fact that the rut normally takes place around late July or early August. Roe are the only deer to do this, though other animals including stoats, badgers, bears and skunks do the same.

It is believed that the roe developed the ability for delayed implantation at a point in their evolution when they were at an environmental disadvantage compared with

larger deer species that produced bigger calves. Instead of evolving an increased body size, it seems that the device of delayed implantation was developed instead.

As a result, the roe can rut during the summer with several months of mild weather and good feeding ahead to allow the recovery of body condition before winter sets in. Kids are born at a favourable time of year with abundant food and a kind climate, and they have plenty of time to grow to a size and strength that enhances their survival chances for the coming winter.

Rarely, you might encounter a roe with tiny, vestigial canine teeth. Many of the deer species have canines, a remnant from a time when their ancestors resembled the more primitive muntjac or Chinese water deer and before antlers had really started to evolve. The roe is at an evolutionary stage when they have all but lost them, but examine your next buck or doe carefully and you may see them.

Aggression

Despite their delicate appearance and shyness, roe can be highly aggressive towards each other. As spring approaches and testosterone levels rise among the bucks, the desire to establish exclusive territories means that they become increasingly intolerant of each other. Fights between well-matched bucks are usually brief and the loser is quick to flee, but if he becomes trapped or stumbles his enraged rival will gore him savagely.

It is rare to see roe — especially bucks — in captivity. One that has lost its fear of man, perhaps after being hand-reared, can be unpredictable and capable of inflicting serious injury on an unwary handler. One bottle-reared buck in a wildlife park frequently attacked not only his keepers but also the does confined with him. The eventual solution was to saw off his antlers every May and cover the stumps with sections of rubber hose. ■

ROE DEER FACTS

WORLD DISTRIBUTION: Native to most of Europe, extending as far as Turkey and western Russia. Not present in northern Scandinavia, Iceland, Ireland and some of the Mediterranean islands

UK DISTRIBUTION: Widespread across most of mainland UK

FOOD: A browsing deer, which feeds selectively, mainly on buds shoots and leaves and other high-quality fodder according to season.

HABITAT: A woodland deer that adapts successfully to other habitats, including open farmland, grassland, heath and open moor. Often encountered in semi-urban areas.

RUT: From mid-July to early August.

GESTATION PERIOD: After a long gestation due to delayed implantation, birthing takes place in May or June. Twins are normal, occasionally triplets occur.

ANTLER CYCLE: Casts November/December, clean between late February and April. Older animals tend to cast and clean first.

LIFESPAN: Usually around seven or eight years, but up to 12 years recorded in the wild.

HEIGHT: Bucks around 75cm at the shoulder; does 70cm

WEIGHT: Bucks 25kg or more, does around 22kg. Animals from poorer habitats may be considerably smaller.

SHOOTING SEASON: Bucks: England and Wales 1 April to 31 October; Scotland: 1 April to 20 October; Does: England and Wales 1 November to 31 March; Scotland 21 October – 31 March

MINIMUM CALIBRES:

	CALIBRE	MUZZLE ENERGY	MUZZLE VELOCITY	BULLET
ENGLAND & WALES	.240in	1,700ft/lb	N/A	N/A
SCOTLAND	N/A	1,000ft/lb	2,450fps	50 grains

• All bullets used must be designed to expand in a predictable manner.



Twins are common in roe does



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Instruction

- Dumped foxes causing havoc pg 40
- How to judge lead pg 42
- Where to start pigeon shooting pg 46

Geoff carries out
a reconnaissance
before the shoot



Home advantage

Geoff Garrod explains why roost shooting is a sporting challenge like no other

Roost shooting wood pigeons in February is possibly the finest sporting challenge this country has to offer. We are also protecting crops and controlling vermin for farmers.

To give yourself the best chance of a good couple of hours' shooting, do your

homework. If you can, spend some time the day before observing with your binoculars. Work out which wood they roost in, where they have been feeding, which line they prefer to approach the wood, and make a note of the wind direction. Visit the wood and walk around to look for signs of where

the birds settle for the night. Droppings and feathers usually give this away.

Also, look for likely habitat. You will often see pigeons landing in a wood and could presume that is where they will stay for the night. That is rarely the case if they have landed in deciduous trees. Pigeons will





Pigeons flying in woodland are not an easy target



Eley Pigeon is Geoff's favourite cartridge

stop off to check that an area is safe before moving to their roosting site, which is more likely to be in evergreen conifers or ivy covered trees that offer more protection from the elements.

Conditions

The weather plays a big part in roost shooting, probably more so than decoying. If you have the luxury of being able to choose when you go shooting, look for the ideal forecast,

which is a strong wind, cold and cloudy. On still evenings, any approaching birds will arrive at a great height and drop in from all directions. This makes choosing the shooting position much harder.

A strong wind keeps the height of the pigeons down and focuses their arrival line. Pigeons will land into the wind, which gives them far greater control in flight. Often, if the wind is strong enough, you can position yourself on the downwind side of the wood and shoot as the pigeons come low up the field. They do this to stay in the still air that is sheltered from the wind before rising up at the last minute to get to tree-top height.

If you are restricted to shooting at weekends, try to get together with as many other pigeon shooters as possible and each take a separate wood to shoot. Having others out will keep the flock on the move and hopefully help everybody get some shooting.

Time

Ideally, you want to aim to be in the wood by 3pm. This will give you time to watch the movement of birds and choose the best place to stand, if the conditions are different from when you did your reconnaissance. Make sure you are wearing appropriate clothing – both for warmth and camouflage. Pigeons have extremely keen eyesight and will easily spot movement and anything they are not expecting to see when they arrive home.

The height of the trees in your wood will dictate the choke and

One less pigeon to eat crops as Geoff's Lab retrieves



Droppings will indicate roosting sites

cartridge combination that will work best for you. Most of our trees are more than 100ft tall. That means the pigeons will be 130ft up. I use Eley Pigeon HV 32g fibre through a three-quarter choke. If your trees are younger and smaller perhaps you should think about a slightly more open choke, but I'd keep the cartridge load a bit heavier than for decoying, because you have to allow for a few pellets hitting the branches.



Pigeon shooting

INSTRUCTION

When shooting in woods, focus on the target, not the obstacles



One of the joys of roost shooting is that you don't have to lug loads of kit around and you can be mobile. Changing location is nowhere near as painful as when you are decoying. If you find that for whatever reason the pigeons are landing in an area where you can't shoot them, don't be afraid to move – you may only have to move 10yd to get a better sight of them.

Sometimes they have been feeding in a different area from the day before and their flightline is completely different. React and adapt to the circumstances.

It's important to get into a position that gives you as much advance warning as possible of approaching birds. You may have found the perfect hole in the canopy to get a clear shot but if you haven't seen them in time, you're more than likely to miss your shot because of the time it takes to mount your gun, get the safety off and get a bead on the bird. This way, you will always be playing catch-up and miss behind. Focus your eyes through the canopy and try to spot

“Pigeons will stop to check an area is safe before moving to their roosting site”

movement while trying to avoid focusing on the branches.

The same goes for shooting. When you shoot, make sure you look at the bird and not the branches and keep the gun moving.



Geoff checks the crop to see where the birds are feeding

There is temptation to slow the gun down and try to take the shot when there is a gap in the trees. Blank the canopy out of your mind and keep your attention on the bird and shoot as normal. It takes a while to learn this technique but when you have, you will shoot more birds.

I like to get out of the wood before pitch dark and I make sure everybody that shoots in the woods I keeper does the same. As soon as you hear the first cock pheasant calling it might be a good time to start picking-up your birds.

I always check the crop of one or two of the birds to see what they have been feeding on. This gives me invaluable information as to where I might find them in the next few days for decoying. ■



Catch and carry

Patrick Hook looks at the problem of takeaway foxes; animals trapped and cared for then dumped in more rural areas by charities and well-meaning people

If you do much foxing you are doubtless aware that most farmers are worried to some extent about 'drop-outs' — trapped foxes released on or close to their land by some of the animal charities.

It's a regular occurrence for me to have to reassure the people I shoot for that I haven't seen any recent evidence of this happening in the area. It's important to know as much as you can about the subject to gain their

“The problem usually starts when the fox population grows too big in a nearby urban area”

ALAMY



This fox appears to have had its ears cut off, a cruel act or some sort of surgery?

Foxing

Foxes find easy pickings in towns, from rooting in rubbish or discarded takeaway cartons



confidence. If you don't hit the right spot, they go away convinced that there are lots of foxes about and may start asking other people to come and shoot them instead. This isn't good either for your reputation nor for maintaining your permissions.

The problem usually starts when the fox population grows too big in a nearby urban area. Complaints start to be made about all the nasty things that go hand in hand with vulpine presence: piles of excrement in gardens, children's toys being chewed up, cats either being terrorised or going missing, bins being upended. Traps are put out and those caught are taken off to local 'shelters'. After a spell, they are then released back into

the wild. This is often done close to a chicken farm or other food-rich spot.

Confusion

Working out just what has been going on can be very difficult. There are innumerable tales going round in shooting circles, with most coming from a 'friend of a friend', or being overheard 'down the pub' or the local gun shop. Many concern lorries or vans turning up in unexpected places and dumping large numbers of unwanted foxes.

I have never witnessed a release but I have certainly seen evidence that it's happened in my area. The surest signs are when you

Patrick's Top Tips

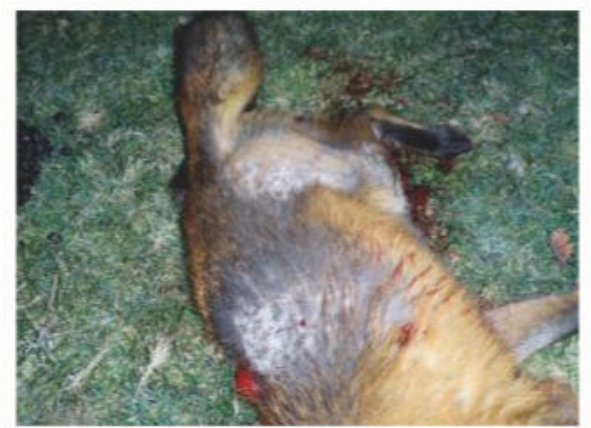
If you suspect that mass releases of foxes are happening your area, you can never relax. The most important thing is to be aware of the issue so that you can reassure your farmers that you are always keeping an eye out on their behalf. Some of the key signs are:

- **Lots of foxes suddenly appearing where previously there were very few and the presence of foxes that seem unafraid of humans. This may not be unusual when close to towns.**
- Daylight raids on livestock, especially animals kept close to houses such as ducks, chickens and pet rabbits. Bear in mind that this can also happen when fox parents are desperately trying to feed hungry cubs.
- **The unexpected appearance of foxes with mange – sometimes this has clearly been treated, other times not. Keep any dogs well away from affected animals.**
- Other clues are amputations, evidence of stitches on wounds, tattoos and even – so I've been told – ear tags with identification numbers.



Some urban foxes have had their tails amputated

suddenly either see lots of disoriented foxes or get a flurry of calls about them lurking around livestock. I feel genuinely sorry for the foxes – one minute they're living the high life in some urban area, eating leftover burgers, nice bowls of food left out for them



Urban foxes often show signs of mange that you don't see in true country ones

by well-meaning householders and having an easy time. The next, they're rounded up and dumped in another's fox's territory and expected to find and kill their own food.

I first came across released foxes many years ago, when I saw several confused animals wandering about that clearly hadn't a clue where they were. They had no idea how to get through the hedges – thick Devon banks in this part of the world – where the crossing points were or what was going on. They all seemed nervous – they'd probably encountered local animals keen on ejecting any intruders.

Among the giveaway signs were that most of them had large patches of treated mange. Others had had their tails amputated. Since the farm was close to the North Devon link road, a busy dual carriageway, the likeliest explanation was that they'd been transported to a quiet lay-by then released.

Offence

Whether it is a criminal offence to do this has not, as far as I know, ever been tested in a court of law. It may well, for instance, be in contravention of the Abandonment of Animals Act 1960, which makes it an offence to abandon an animal, or permit it to be abandoned, "in circumstances likely to cause the animal any unnecessary suffering". That such suffering does often occur is in no doubt in my mind, but then I'm not a lawyer.

It has been suggested that when some solid evidence is obtained as to a mass release one of the shooting organisations should bring about a prosecution. The problem with this is that, as far as I'm aware, each shelter is an independent legal entity. Therefore, though you may be able to hold one to account, there will still be a large number left in operation.

A better option would be to make it both politically and socially unacceptable to do it in the first place. But I won't be holding my breath on this count. ■

Be led by instinct

Tony Bracci addresses some common problems shooters have with forward allowance, or lead

People tell me that they hear mixed messages from other shooters about how much lead to give and often what they see is vastly different to the advice given. It is a subject that generates much conversation at clay grounds and shoots across the country. I will add to these conversations to help you get a clear view of what is needed.

Method

This moves us onto method. If you shoot swing through, your gun will be moving faster than the target. If you shoot pull

away, your gun will be with the target then accelerating away from the target. If you shoot maintained lead, then your gun will be moving at the same speed as the target. If one shooter is shooting one method and relates his perception to another shooter using another method, this may not be correct for them. Taking advice from another Gun should be avoided unless you know them well and you shoot a similar style. The advice may be given with the best of intention but may not help you at all.

There are a great number of factors that can influence your perception of forward



Forward allowance will depend on which method you are using

allowance, or lead. How you swing the gun can have a big influence. If your swing is fast, then your perception of lead will be reduced. If you swing steady and deliberately, the perception will be greater. This doesn't mean fast is good as a certain amount of control is needed, but if you change your swing it may alter your perception.

Mind the gap

Taking advice on forward allowance gives you a precise measurement, which is not helpful

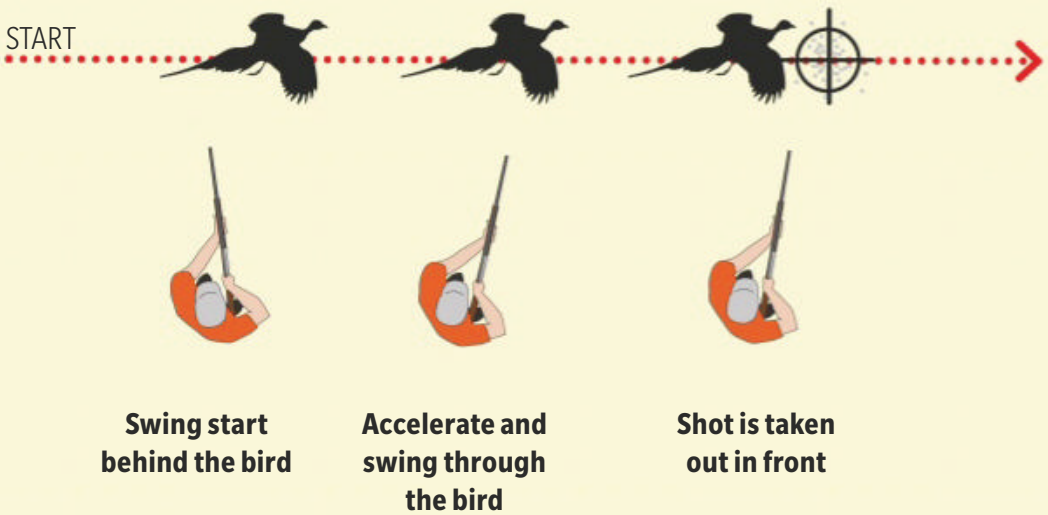
and amounts to you going into the stand with your own predetermined 'gap'. To measure anything you have to have two reference points: one, the target; two, the gun. We should always be focused on the target and not on the gun.

Also, with a pre-determined gap in mind it is more likely that once the 'gap' is achieved the Gun will stop to take the shot, resulting in a miss behind. We must have a moving gun for a moving target.

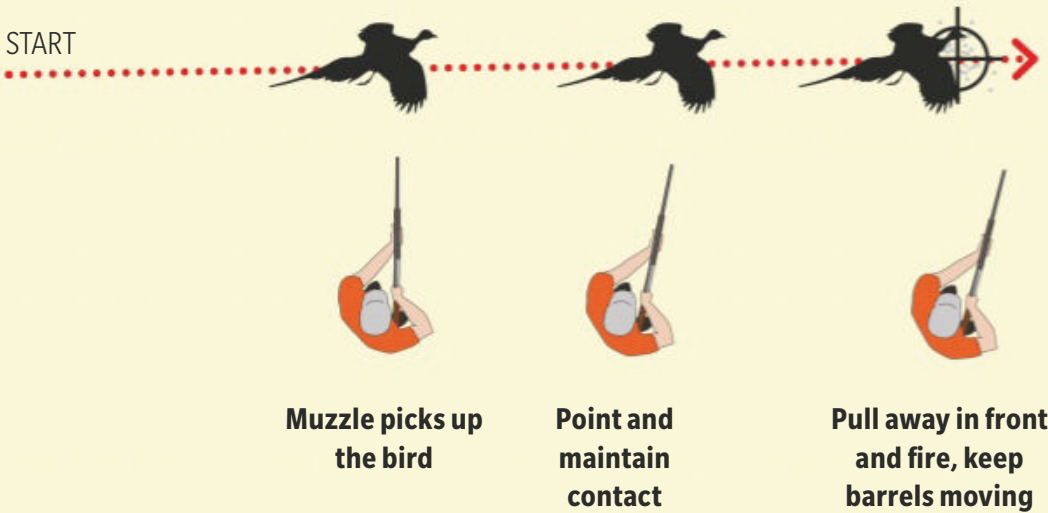
Instinct

Lead should not be measured but, rather, used instinctively. The shotgun has a pattern of shot rather than a solid single projectile. This allows you to shoot instinctively rather than with the conscious mind, as you would when shooting a rifle. Perception of lead is not exact or precise but approximate. Any conscious awareness of where your barrels are will impede your swing; the barrels should only be in your peripheral vision, certainly not in focus, as your focus should be on the target. All too often we see a Gun shooting well only to drop the last one or two targets. This results from checking and trying to make sure and not focusing on the target and trusting instinct. »

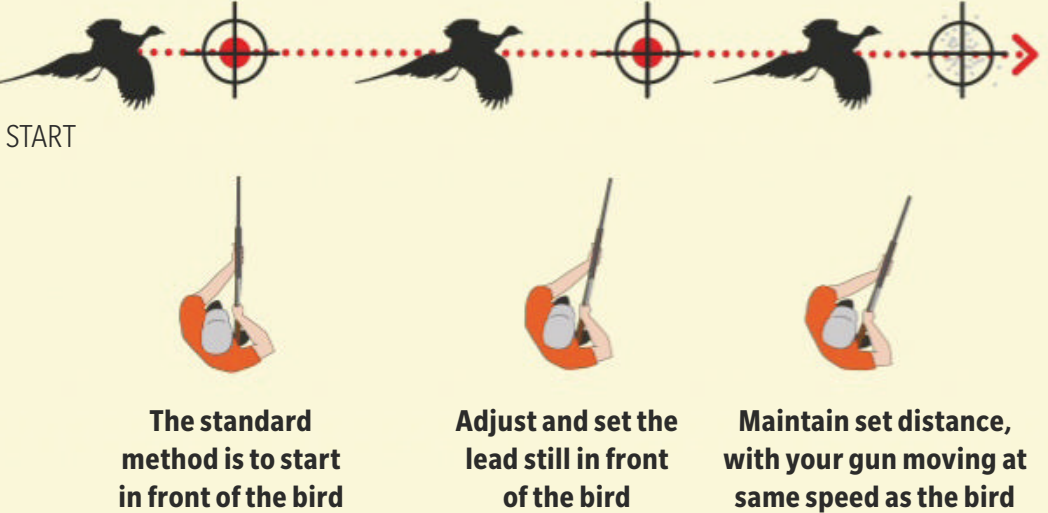
SWING-THROUGH METHOD



PULL-AWAY METHOD



MAINTAINED-LEAD METHOD



Do your best
to shoot
instinctively



Body position
can alter your
perception of lead

“Any conscious awareness of where your barrels are will impede your swing”

Position

Body position can alter some shooters' perceptions of lead, as they don't adjust their body position for some targets. If your body is in the wrong position it will tighten and slow your swing. Your body should be set up in a neutral position where you will be taking the shot, to allow your body to move freely and follow through. A compromise may be had with two similar break points, but if the break points are in very different positions your feet should move between shots to allow a free-moving swing. If you set up for the first shot and don't adjust your position,

your swing will be impeded by resistance from your body tightening and your swing will slow and miss the target.

Hold

Hold points, whether starting gun up or gun down, can have an effect on your perception of lead. Starting your gun too far away from the kill point will elongate the swing, allowing you to have time to look at the gun and measure. Too close to the kill point will encourage you to poke or stab at the target. Poking in front of the target with a static gun will enlarge your perception of lead to break the target.

Readjust

If you think everything is in place and it is not working, try to alter your perception of lead. More is not the only option. Is the target that far away? Is the target as fast as you think, or are you moving the gun much faster? When adjusting, try to 'feel' if the gap is bigger or smaller rather than measuring a difference.

Lead is a very personal thing and taking advice from someone else is not the answer. Try to do everything you can to shoot

Eyes

Eyes can have a big influence on your perceived lead. If you shoot with one eye closed your perception of lead will be far greater than if you shoot with both eyes open. Shooting with both eyes open gives better depth perception than with one eye. Also, using both eyes means it is easier to focus on the target with reference to the gun barrel, whereas with one eye the shooter tends to just focus on the muzzle of the gun.



Do you shoot with
one eye or both?
It makes a difference



If your day is not going as you wish,
try altering your perception of lead

consistently and instinctively. The best result and test for a client is when they are asked, “How much lead did you give that?” and the response is, “I don't know.” This would indicate that they are happy to move the gun to a similar position consistently and instinctively without the need to check. Try to do your own thing and trust your eyes. ■

828 U

SERIES

POSITIVE ACTION

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828 U SPORT

SRP £3,545

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The same premium grade milled aluminium and internal steel locking mechanism as the silver version, but featuring an attractive, subtle, black receiver.

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828U FEATURES

- Cryogenically treated barrels, incorporating Power Bore technology, with carbon fibre top rib.
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Pigeon shooting: where to start

David Turner gives an overview of his favourite sport and how to get going

This is the best live quarry shooting of all, in my opinion. It is thrilling, challenging, widely available, well within the reach of most budgets and often free.

The following is intended to give newcomers an idea of what's involved with the different types of pigeon shooting.

Decoying

Decoying is probably the most common method used. It can be very effective in terms of bag numbers and offers year-round sport on various crop types. One of the most common is oilseed rape, which is often the primary food source for pigeons during the winter. It can be a very frustrating business



Stake your decoys into the ground at random intervals

finding fields that are popular with pigeons, especially ones they will return to time and again. Pigeons tend to 'flock-up' and behave as one, moving from field to field en masse. I wish I had a pound for every time I arrived at a favourite field, walked the birds off and set up my hide, never to see them again.

Decoying, roost shooting and flighting are the most popular types of pigeon shooting.

Spring drillings are among the most predictable as there is often not much of it around. A favourite summertime crop is laid wheat or barley. Some of my best bags have come from sessions over flattened crops.

Roost shooting

This form of the sport is all about shooting birds as they come home to roost, also known as 'last knockings'. It is for a limited period during February and March, but can be spectacular and is very challenging.

Flighting

Flighting pigeons can be great fun. The secret of this discipline is to know a flightline and tuck yourself away in a hedge and enjoy a stream of birds coming your way.

What's needed?

There is all sorts of equipment you will need to go decoying.

- What gun should I use? Your usual everyday gun is probably fine for the job, particularly if it's an over-and-under. Most of these are a little heavier and will help absorb recoil, which is important if you are lucky enough to have a big day of 100-plus birds.

My favourite type of gun for shooting from a hide is a semi-auto, which I have found to be perfect for the job as it's pretty much recoil free and doesn't need to be opened within the confinements of a hide. The best of all is a 20-bore semi-auto, which will give you low recoil, lightness and fast handling. With 30g No6s this can be as deadly as it gets and is a joy to use.

How to start?

There are a number of ways to start but the most successful for me has always been to locate feeding birds. This involves some long hours reconnoitring, finding out who owns or manages fields you mark, then asking if you can shoot on them. When you make a request I think it's important to look presentable, show your BASC and/or CPSA membership, insurance certificate and maybe even your shotgun licence.

An internet search will reveal various clubs and forums with much information. When I first started beating we were invited to a few roost shoots at the end of the game season, which in turn led me to connect with some other like-minded shooters.

"I wish I had a pound for every time I set up my hide never to see the birds again"

There are now agencies offering pigeon shooting. This type of shooting is often payable on a per-bird basis, which works well for both parties as the proprietors know what they are doing and have a reputation to uphold. This is a very good option for those prepared to pay for their shooting. Sharing with a friend can be great fun and help to reduce the cost.

What cartridge loads?

I would recommend 30g to 32g No5s or No6s with fibre wads (as we're shooting in the field and need to be environmentally aware) for



A hide is easy to knock up using straw bales and some camouflage netting

12-bore guns, and 28g to 30g for 20-bores. The only downside with autos is they spit spent cases out all over the place.

Hides

There are various options and, again, an internet search will highlight a variety of companies offering all sorts of ready-made products, complete with poles and netting.

Using vegetation can provide a more natural-looking hide, matching the surrounding trees and shrubs. If you are shooting in the summer over wheat or barley stubble, use straw bales. Basically, anything that merges with the environment.

Dress

It's important to wear drab or camouflaged clothing to ensure you blend into your surroundings and not to stick out like a sore



Putting a shot decoy pigeon on to a flapper

thumb. A face mask is also a very useful item. This can make all the difference on days when the birds are wary and cautious of approaching a decoy pattern.

Decoys

There are a number of options including shell decoys and solid decoys. The benefit of the shell type is lightness and mobility. My preference, however, is for shot birds, which I keep in the freezer, ready for action.

Magnets and flappers

Magnets can make all the difference to a bag, but I have experienced plenty of days when they didn't work. In fact, they can sometimes

put birds off. On these occasions all you can do is experiment. One thing's for sure, movement can be a great 'puller' of birds and my go-to item is a good old fashioned single bird flapper.

Best of all for me is the sport I have enjoyed over the years, be it small days, long forgotten ones and some very memorable outings. You can make as much of it as you want, depending on the effort you put in.

Pigeons will offer you all sorts of fantastic targets – fast and high to low and slow, drifting in to decoys. They have helped me become a well-rounded shot. I would recommend that you give it a go. I bet you will love it. ■

Tucking into the hedgerow gives you ideal cover

Eyes on the prize



Graham Brown looks at what makes a successful instructor and tells Paul Quagliana about some of the methods he employs at the Purbeck Shooting School



Graham Brown is well known in the world of clayshooting, both for running his own ground and for setting up courses at home and abroad. He has also gained recognition as an instructor. Over the past few years he has chalked up some notable achievements, with his students shooting at county level and, in one case, competing at the Commonwealth Games having started from scratch a little over two years previously. What is striking is how short a time it has taken to coach them to such high levels. In some cases, they are shooting excellent scores after only a few months of tuition. What is his secret?

Graham said: "There are a multitude of factors involved in both being a good instructor and in the student doing well with a shotgun. Some absorb knowledge more quickly than others and as an instructor I have to assess how rapidly they are improving and if there are any problems that need resolving before I take them to more advanced levels."

Methods

Graham also trains other instructors at his Dorset ground and often plays the part of



PATRICK HOOK, ALAMY

Tracking a clay by hand can give an idea of its speed and trajectory

a student, deliberately introducing errors to see if the would-be instructor can spot them. On this particular day the student was 22-year-old Billy Davis, a farmer and former footballer who had been shooting since he was small but hadn't had any formal lessons. Having been a footballer, he understood and responded well to being coached. In the same way that fitness, strength and ball skills were built up on the football field, posture,

gun mount and technique apply in the shooting field.

"Timing is one of the most vital aspects in shooting, as in many sports," Graham continued, "and Billy has a good understanding of this due to his former time as a footballer. There is no 'one size fits all' in shooting. Psychology as well as technique has to be solid. One of many issues is when to talk and when not to. With Billy, I talk »



PAUL QUAGLIANA

Billy shooting a bolting rabbit clay: rabbits can be deceptive targets when it comes to their speed, so assess it and try using the interception method to smash them

Driven clay 1: Billy shooting a driven clay. He is standing close to the edge of the stand and this will give him less time to see and shoot the clay. He needs to move back.



Driven clay 2: Billy has moved back in the stand to shoot a driven clay. This will give him more room and allow him to shoot the clay quicker so he can get onto the crossing target on report.

very little; there is no need to open your mouth unless you have to. If the student is progressing well, leave them to get on with it. I try to stimulate answers from the student; if there is an error can they identify, what is it and can they correct it? I want them to analyse the error and I will answer 'yes' or 'no' depending on their diagnosis.

Age

"Age can sometimes be an issue when teaching someone. The older you get the

more knowledge and life experiences you accumulate, hence you question things more. Younger people can be easier to teach as they absorb knowledge without question, they have a less analytical mind so are more trusting. The secret is to give them the right knowledge. Where instruction is concerned, less is more. Less information means less confusion; give them what they need to hear and avoid information overload.

"I try to find things in other areas of their life that they can relate to in shooting. For example, in Billy's case he is used to passing balls on the football pitch to another player. As such, he can translate this to understanding the principle of leading a target. If he aims the ball straight at a running player, it will pass behind the player, just as pellets will pass behind a moving target. Everybody has ability, everyone has coordination, and it is how we develop that without spoiling it. We have to enhance what people have got, not divert away from it. When teaching different techniques the student must understand them but shoot

instinctively when using them. They must think to the plan but not think to shoot. If they are thinking about the process when shooting it will slow them down.

"Physique must also be taken into account; the right gun and cartridges are vital. Gun fit is essential, with cast probably being the most important consideration, with stock length and drop, in that order, coming next. Vision assessment is vital and any consistent errors could be down to this. There are two stages of vision: instant and settled. The first stage is where the target is sighted, the settled stage is observing what the target is doing – its trajectory, distance and angle. Incorrect gun fit, particularly cast, compounded by eye issues will be a constant hindrance to the shooter, no matter how good they are at assessing a target."

Billy's expression would suggest he is enjoying himself. If a student shows signs of fatigue, frustration or boredom it is time to stop and take a break



Gun and cartridge choice will differ between students but whatever combination is used it must be right from the start



The expression says it all. If a student is missing a target they need to assess why and if they cannot the instructor should be able to tell them



Graham normally teaches his students to shoot gun down, but sometimes gun up can work; be prepared and practice using both methods.

Graham and Billy left the clubhouse to tackle a range of targets. Billy had been brought up with the 'swing-through' technique, which works best when a target is travelling in a straight line; if the target is curling problems can arise if you stick solely to this technique. Once committed to the swing it can be hard to correct. Swing-through is a traditional technique but on curling pheasants may cause problems (driven gameshooters take note).

Graham: "Billy has learned the other three techniques: pull away, interception and maintained lead. It is vital that he maintains regular lessons, otherwise, if there are gaps in training he may go back to using his swing-through technique for everything. People tend to revert to type

if training stops rather than trusting new techniques."

The purpose of today's lesson was to assess Billy's progress, looking particularly at different break points when shooting the same clay. A good example was a driven clay followed by an on-report low right-to-left crosser. Billy was breaking the driven clay overhead comfortably but then had to make quite a movement to get his gun back down in time to get onto the crosser. Graham suggested two ways of alleviating this: first, if the rules and space allow, move back in the stand, which will give you more time to see and shoot the driven clay; second, increase gun speed, allowing you to shoot the driven clay sooner. By taking it as early as possible it is at a shallower angle, which makes getting the gun onto the crosser quicker. The transition to the second clay should be as prompt as possible, allowing more time to shoot.

On track

Graham: "You will sometimes see a shooter 'tracking' a clay with his or her hand. This not only gives the Shot an idea of the trajectory but also the speed at which the clay is travelling. Bolting rabbits can be particularly deceptive. Due to them invariably having a close background, they can appear to be moving faster than they really are. Also

the technique used is vital. The rabbit clay is slowing down all the time and using a technique such as pull-away can cause you to over lead it. You are effectively accelerating ahead of it when it is actually slowing down. Billy missed the first rabbit due to failure to track and assess its speed and also by using the wrong technique. Tracking it and using the interception method where you shoot almost as the gun hits your shoulder resulted in success. All targets are 'hard until they are on the card'. Learn to shoot slow and fast, learn to speed up and slow down. One of the reasons top Shots succeed is because they can hit the easier clays as well as the hard ones. It is easy to be complacent on easy clays as the shooter can think they don't require as much thought as tougher targets. Shooters can worry about missing long clays but the shorter ones can catch you out.

"When a new customer comes for tuition at the school, there is no set format to how I teach them. I will do certain mandatory checks, such as gunfit and vision, but after that there is no set menu. The situation is very fluid and it evolves according to the ability of the student. There are a multitude of factors involved in both being a good instructor and in the student doing well with a shotgun. It will stand out at an early stage if they are going to be exceptional, but with the right tuition anyone can be taught to be a good Shot. It is how they are taught and how they respond to teaching that dictates their progress." ■



They call it puppy love

Fran Ardley takes you through the early stages of dealing with a new arrival in the house

This is the time of the year that people will be breeding or getting a new gundog puppy. For many, it may well be their first time training any dog, let alone a gundog.

There will be questions that the novice owner will want to know the answers to, ranging from housing (house or kennel), feeding and, last but not least, when to start training and what to do in the early stages.

As with all things relating to training gundogs, nothing is set in stone. However, when you bring a new puppy home you should set some ground rules, especially if the dog is going to live in a family environment. I believe in preventing problems rather than trying to correct them later.

It is understandable that a new owner would like to crack on and start training their new puppy but I always point out to my clients that they will (hopefully) have a working gundog for 10 to 12 years, so there is no rush.

Let the puppy enjoy being a puppy, socialise it, let it experience the wider environment – get it used to going in the car, meeting other dogs and generally learning about life.

There will be plenty of time for serious training but there are some exercises I like to undertake with all my young dogs, whatever the breed, and these lay down foundations for more formal training at a later date.

When

Around six months is the common age to start formal training but much depends on the dog and the breed and it is not a hard and fast rule. Regardless of the breed, however, there are some basic behaviours that I try to instil in all my puppies.

I have found that some male puppies are a bit slower to mature than bitches and therefore I adjust my training accordingly. You can find that even two pups out of the same litter need a different approach.

Currently I have two dog pups, Joss and Roo, out of the same litter that I will be training over the coming months. Ordinarily, I would not advocate getting more than one pup from the same litter, especially for a novice owner. I am fortunate to have the time and facilities to train and house the puppies separately and build up their bond with me and not each other, which can happen if siblings are kept together.



Early exercises should be all about having fun

“Much depends on the dog and breed as to when to start training”

How

Early exercises with young dogs should be all about having fun and creating an environment where the little dog thinks you are the best thing ever and the centre of his universe. If you can achieve this, the puppy will want to be with you rather than running off to find more exciting things.

Be under no illusion, however – the running off may well happen at some point



Don't discourage him from jumping up with the ball

Top Tips

- I would not consider doing any formal training with a puppy until they are at least six months old as by then they are a bit more physically and mentally able to cope with it. In the early days I like to spend a lot of time playing with the puppies but at the same time I am creating good habits such as recall and getting them fixed on a ball or small dummy. This will pay dividends later.

- **There are some things that you should not do as you could end up creating major issues, some of which you may find difficult to rectify.**

For example:

- **Do not take a young puppy to a clay shooting ground to see if it is going to be gun shy. This is an aspect of a gundog's training that needs careful consideration and if done too early or incorrectly can scare a young dog and ruin it for life**

- Do not bore the puppy by doing repeated exercises over and over again, especially retrieving. Little and often, and always finish on a good point

- **Keep a young dog off ground that has a lot of scent or game on it. A playing field or even a car park is an ideal place for early training exercises**

- Avoid giving a young dog any game too early (especially cockers) as this can put them off dummies or balls and can make ongoing training trickier, especially during the summer months

- **I prefer to separate the walking (free time) of my pups and the training. I do one or the other, as that way they soon learn the difference and I find their concentration levels are far better.**

- Definitely do not take them out into the shooting field too early. This can induce faults such as running in and barking, as they are not able to cope with the pressure. On average, and depending on the dog, I wouldn't expect to introduce a young dog to the shooting field until they are around 18 to 24 months.

as the puppy matures and starts to push boundaries. You will find it easier to manage these inevitable occurrences if you have the foundations in place.

The ball

From the outset I like to get my puppies focused on a tennis ball. Later I will use a fur ball and then a small dummy but early on I want to develop a behaviour in the puppy where it connects the ball with playtime and sees that the fun comes from me throwing it.

Most of the gundog breeds love to retrieve (some cockers love to bury their retrieves but that is another article) and you can quickly develop a good game of fetch.

At this stage do not put any pressure on the puppy such as commanding it to sit when it brings the ball back. If it wants to jump up at you with the ball at this stage do not discourage this, keep everything light and

Eye contact
is vital with
new puppy



don't overdo it. Stop before the puppy gets bored. A light touch is all that is required at this point.

The retrieve

If you get the chance to watch gundogs in the field, you may see some of them throw their heads around when the handler is trying to take a retrieve. This can be for a number of reasons. At a later stage in their development, I like to desensitise them »

to having my hands around their heads, necks and chest, especially while they have a retrieve in their mouths. Do not rush and snatch the ball or dummy out of their mouths as this can lead to them spitting out the retrieve. Use plenty of quiet encouragement and keep nice and calm. Do not expect perfection at this stage.



Fuss your puppy when making a retrieve

The eyes have it

If I were asked what I considered to be the most important part of a puppy's development I would have to say eye contact. If a dog is reluctant to look at its owner, then it suggests it has no respect for the handler and perhaps does not find them very interesting and is looking for something more exciting to focus on. The ball or a treat is the key to good eye contact. Once you have the pup focused on the ball you can start to hold it at chest level and the dog will naturally start to look up. I like to give some quiet words of encouragement for this.

Take a lead

Some trainers suggest you should hold off putting a young gundog on the lead (especially a spaniel) as it can reduce the drive in the dog. For most people, however, getting their young pup to walk on a lead is something that, for practical reasons, they have to do quite early on.

Initially, I like to do my lead work on a track or path as there are fewer distractions and this helps to keep their noses off the ground. I also encompass the previous lesson by using a treat or ball in hand at chest level



Getting a puppy used to being on a lead is important



Use a treat to encourage him to stay

to encourage the puppy to look up at me and stay with me rather than pulling on in front.

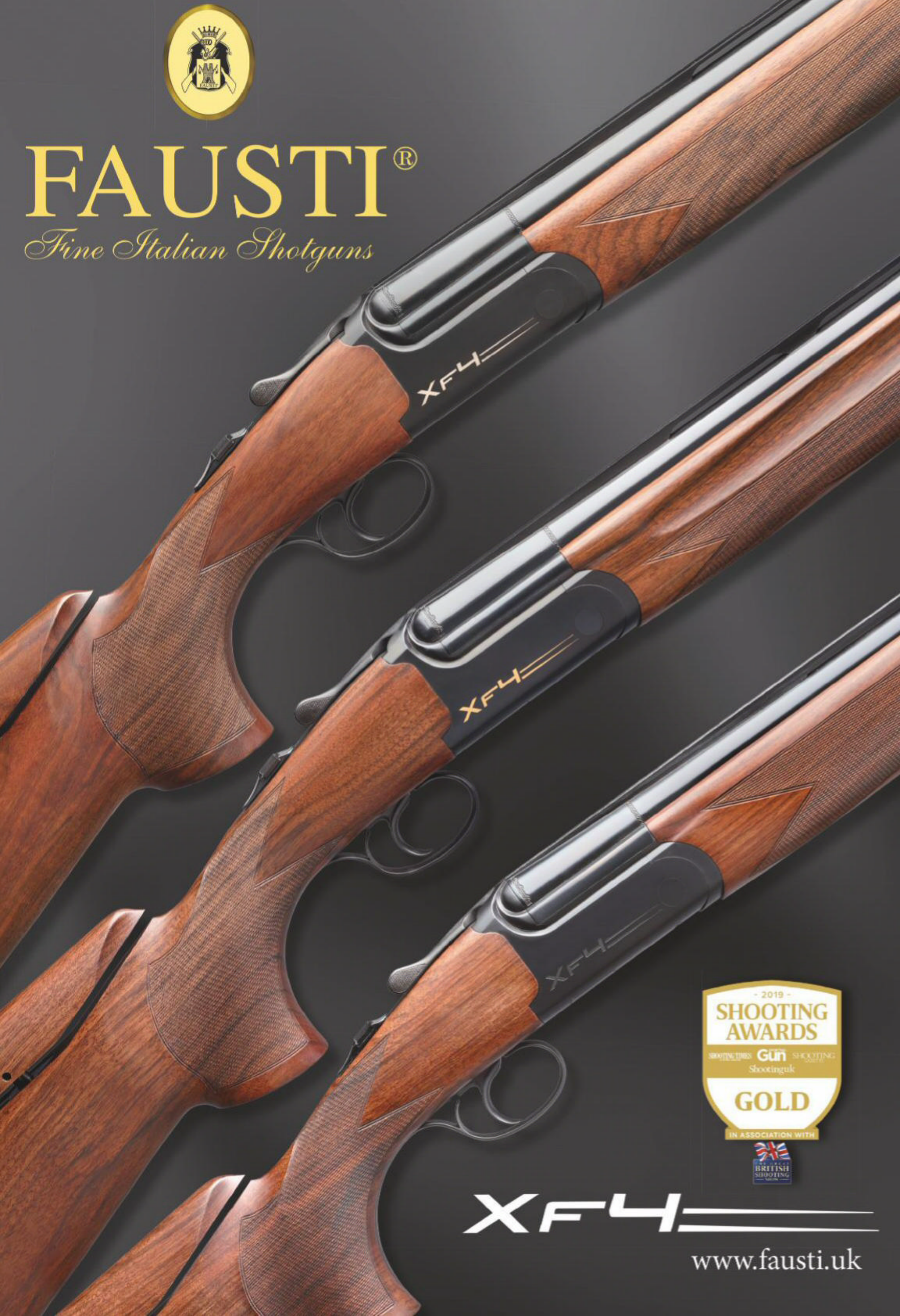
Quietly does it

Finally, do not underestimate the importance of just sitting and doing nothing with your young dog. There are plenty of times during a shoot day when you will be standing still waiting for a drive to start or with your dog sitting at a peg. Learning to sit quietly and wait for the next instruction is a behaviour you can develop in a puppy by gradually increasing the time they are simply watching the world go by. ■



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The problem:

Exocrine pancreatic insufficiency

I am thinking of taking on a lovely orange belton English setter puppy but I have just discovered that her father has exocrine pancreatic insufficiency. Should I proceed? **ZOLTAN CONNELL**, DUR

Vet's advice **Neil McIntosh** SG's gundog health expert

The English setter is a traditional gundog breed dating back to the 1800s and is renowned for being gentle and biddable, so can be super in the field and the family, but I regret you should avoid this puppy.

The disease

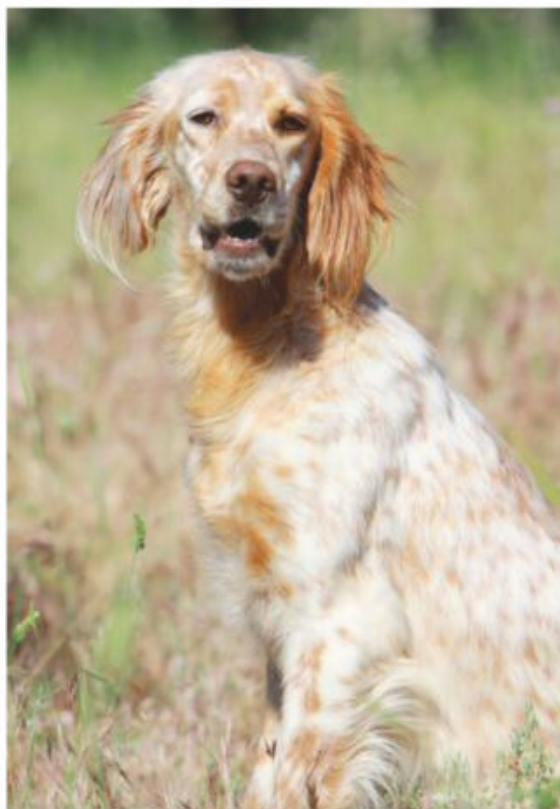
Exocrine pancreatic insufficiency, or EPI, is a disease that can be inherited in German shepherds, collies and English setters. For many years it was thought to be a simple autosomal recessive disorder – where both parents could appear normal but be carriers of the condition.

However, research by Clark and Cox in 2012 showed that multiple genes are involved, as are environmental factors. Clinical signs can appear at any time between six months and six years of age, so dogs may have sired a number of litters before the problem is evident.

For me, the risk of your proposed pup developing the disease is too high. It should be noted that other breeds can also be affected, but for different reasons.

What is EPI?

The pancreas is a small V-shaped organ, situated in the anterior abdomen, adjacent



It's not worth taking a risk where a parent is known to have the disease

to the duodenum, which is the first part of the bowel that exits the stomach. It is composed of two crucial parts: the endocrine portion or islets of Langerhans produce insulin, which regulates blood sugar. The exocrine portion or acinar cells secrete digestive enzymes, fluid and bicarbonate in response to food ingestion.

EPI occurs where there is insufficient excretion of digestive enzyme from the pancreas. Since there is considerable functional reserve in the pancreas, clinical signs often do not develop until quite late in the disease process, when 90% of the acinar cells have been lost.

What happens?

Due to an inherited autoimmune disorder, there is progressive atrophy of the pancreatic acinar cells – the exocrine part of the pancreas quite simply wastes away.

In rare circumstances, acinar cells can be lost as a result of prolonged chronic pancreatitis. These patients are usually older and have a history of recurrent tummy upsets with abdominal pain. The end result is a lack of digestive enzyme leading to classic clinical signs.

Diabetes does not occur because the endocrine portion remains unaffected.

How do you recognise it?

Though there are many other conditions that can result in similar clinical signs (intestinal tumours, inflammatory bowel disease, liver and kidney failure, parasites, etc), patients with EPI present with:

- Correct breed (GSD, collie, English setter);
- Chronic, gradual weight loss;
- Bulky, fatty, smelly faeces;
- Excessive appetite;
- Coprophagia (look it up, unless you are having breakfast);
- Poor body condition and coat quality;
- Vomiting and diarrhoea (sometimes).

“Dogs may have sired a number of litters before the problem is evident”



Pretty as a picture – but English setter puppies are prone to EPI

How do you confirm it?

With so many possible differential diagnoses, it is important to confirm the presence of EPI. While the clinical signs clearly point to it, blood tests will show:

- Low serum trypsin-like immunoreactivity (TLI) levels;
- Low serum cobalamin (vitamin B12);
- High serum folate (vitamin B9).

In the good old days, we used to take faeces from a suspect individual, mix them up with

some water and dip an X-ray film into it for a few hours. The idea was that faeces deficient in pancreatic enzyme would not be able to digest the gelatine protein from the X-ray film, leaving it intact, whereas normal faeces would destroy it. It was a pretty poor test with lots of false results.

Can you treat EPI?

Yes. Usually. Supplementation with pancreatic enzyme in the form of tablets

or powder is often enough to reverse weight loss and improve body condition, though hard work could be impossible. Vitamin B12 levels may need to be boosted by injection and some patients require dietary modification.

A study by Westermarck in 1995 found that feeding moderate fat, low-fibre, highly digestible food decreased flatulence, borborygmi, faecal volume and defecation frequency. ■



Adventures of Nick & Ted

● Age 48 months

Ted's proving to be such a great gundog, **Nick Ridley** has decided to put him out to open stud

I am writing this in the last week of the shooting season with just two beaters' days left to look forward to. That will be that, then, until I head up to my favourite part of the country in a few weeks for a bit of rabbit shooting.

Wiped out

I am a little concerned that Ted will not be well enough to make the beaters' days as the little dog was pretty well wiped out after a recent hard few days' shooting and beating. I walked just shy of 26 miles over the three



Ted is recovering from a tummy bug

days, so can only guess how many Ted had done and most of that was through bracken, bramble and fallen trees.

On the Saturday night he was pretty quiet, which was to be expected, but when we came down in the morning he had brought all his dinner up from the previous night. I wasn't too concerned and I put it down to being one of those things, but when the same thing happened with his breakfast and his dinner on the Sunday, I really did start to get a bit worried.

A bug

On the Monday morning I phoned the vet's for an appointment. I came away £150 lighter but the good news was that he didn't have a temperature and the vet couldn't find any blockages, so he gave him a couple of jabs, some tablets and a rehydrating drink to help keep his fluids up.

However, on my way home Mrs R phoned to say that our older dog Harry had just been sick as well, and this morning Percy also brought up his dinner. From postings on our village Facebook page it seemed there has been a bug going around, lasting about 48 hours. I am hoping Ted will be over it by midweek and be ready for the last couple of days. He seems brighter this morning but he will be on a diet of chicken and rice for the next day or so. »



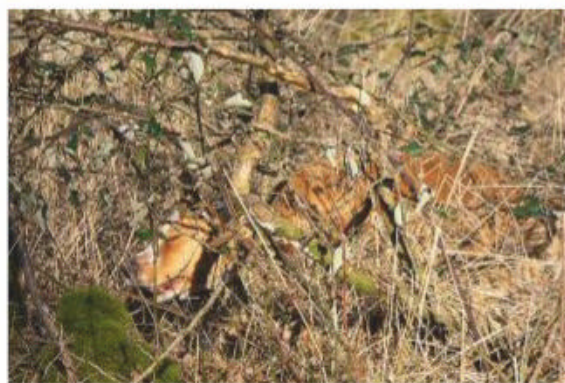
Ted successfully retrieves a rabbit



Ted doing his thing,
retrieving a hen pheasant



Ted now has the chance to pass on his skills



Ted has proved himself time and again

Hard work

The other evening I sat down and worked out that Ted had done 67 days this season and we didn't start until mid-October. There will

“Ted has proved himself in the shooting field time and time again”

NICK RIDLEY

no doubt be plenty of other dogs that would have done more as part of a picking-up team, but Ted has been beating, picking-up and has sat quietly in a duck or pigeon hide as well as extensively shot over on both walked-up and driven days. Yes, there has been the odd moment where it seemed that he had never had a day's training but overall he has done me proud – he has pulled off some fantastic retrieves and has hunted his heart out.

Anyway, all this got me thinking. Regular readers will know that Ted has sired a couple of litters and I am lucky enough to have some of the young dogs coming back with their owners for training. These dogs have shown great promise and I have decided to put Ted at 'open stud'.

Over the past two seasons he has proved himself in the shooting field time and time again. He has been placed in every working test we have entered, including a number of retrieving tests. I have never trialled him, which may be a requirement for some people, but as a classic versatile gundog he has proved himself over and over again.

Percy's progress

I am a bit of a Land Rover fan and for my birthday my family bought me a Lego Technic Land Rover Defender model kit.

It is challenging, to say the least. In fact, it is a bit like training a gundog: you start off with loads of separate components and they make no sense at all. Initially you lay all the bits out and gradually over time, provided you put the pieces together in order, things begin to come together and one step leads to the next and so on.

Eventually (I hope) I will have the finished article, an authentic working model of the Defender.

In the case of Percy, my new cocker pup, we are still laying out all the pieces. At the moment it seems as though I have got a couple of them mixed up because...

well, let's just say that Percy is not reading the same manual as me.

Over the past month I have been working on getting him totally fixed on a tennis ball and encouraging him to 'hunt' for the ball. I have tried using a dummy and he just throws it around like an idiot, yet he carries the ball perfectly – though I am having problems getting him to bring it straight back to me.

At the moment he parades around with it until he is ready to bring it back and, as frustrating as this is, I am confident this is just him being a puppy. I am already working on some techniques to conquer this. I have been excited by the way he is using his nose and he is already going into thicker cover to get the ball. I have a hunch I will be holding on to my coat-tails when he really gets going.



Percy still wants to play sometimes

I have had all his DNA tests done and he is clear; I have had his eyes tested and they are all good. As yet I haven't had his hips done, but I am looking into this and may well go down this route. It is not the be-all and end-all for me, but from what I have seen of his current crop of offspring, Ted really puts his stamp on his pups in terms of sensibility and trainability and this has to be a good thing for the breed. ■

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Letter of the month

Legacy of war

I have enjoyed shooting in France for many years in the Midi-Pyrénées region and especially so over the old battlefields and woods on the Somme in northern France.

Just before Christmas, during a most enjoyable walked-up morning across the fields from Beaumont Hamel towards Thiepval, I pondered what studies have been undertaken regarding the level of metal contamination, especially lead, in the ground under these historic fields.

With the issues of the environmental impact of lead shot at the forefront of many minds, I wonder if there is any proven research that confirms possible harm to human health linked with the large concentrations of lead and other metals in the soil below these fields?

The Somme is intensively farmed, with particular emphasis on root crops such as potatoes, sugar beet and carrots. Grains including wheat, barley and maize are grown in vast quantities and have been for many, many years.

I decided to recover all the metal debris I found that morning while walking up the ploughed fields towards the Ancre Valley and onwards to Thiepval. The attached photo shows the results and includes lead shrapnel balls, brass shell fuse caps and copper fragments from the driving bands of artillery shells, as well as an assortment of brass small arms cartridges.

These remnants of five years of warfare on an industrial scale are present in great numbers all around here. I have never heard any mention of potential health problems from the French people, who have been consuming products grown and raised on these fields for nearly 100 years.

The few pheasants bagged that morning were considerably lighter than the contents of the other bag and tasted, as always, delicious.

PS – Your magazine is enjoyed every month by both my fellow chasseurs and me.

TJ Bright, via email

Closet reader

I have been a loyal *Sporting Gun* reader and subscriber for longer than I care to let on to my wife. However, am I right in thinking that the pagination has decreased somewhat over the past few years? Nowadays I seem to be able to read the magazine from cover to cover during a short trip to the lavatory whereas in the past a more leisurely sojourn would leave me with some 'guns for sale' pages to read on my return.

Alan Pennington, Merseyside

Ed – Thanks for your email, Alan, it made us laugh. On a more serious note and to answer your question, the number of pages in the magazine has decreased. The reason for this is mainly economic. By doing this we have managed to keep the cover price lower than our competitors. We have only decreased by eight pages in the past year and I like to think that we cram as much as we can into our magazine. Thanks for making us privy to your reading habits and I hope *Sporting Gun* continues to keep you entertained wherever you are.

Still got it

This is a recent picture of my father Peter Savage on a day over an oilseed rape field. The result: 67 pigeon with his 28-bore. Not bad going at 76.

Robert Savage, via email



The haul of metal in just one morning

Letter of the month

The Orton packable jacket retails at £199.99 and is available in both men's and women's versions, size EU 48-58 for men and EU 36-46 for women. It is a lightweight, waterproof jacket that is breathable, quick-drying and packs into its own pocket. It features the Härkila Weather System membrane, designed especially for shooting. All in all, it is a stylish and practical option for the shooting season.



HÄRKILA



67 birds at 76 years old



Proud joint winners of the Beater of the Year award

Young coves

I thought this picture of the two youngest members of the North Cove shoot might interest some readers. Jack and Jacob have been helping out all season with the fun jobs on the shoot. Each year a beater of the year award is given to one beater and picker-up

who has shown dedication in the field. This year Jack (right) and Jacob were given the award jointly. It is nice to see the future of our sport enjoying it so much and keeping the dads on their toes on Saturday mornings. **Josh Foot, proud dad of Jack, via email**

Code red

I believe your answer to a reader's question about the use of red diesel in a tractor towing a beaters' wagon on a farm is slightly misleading and requires clarification.

Sections 8.3, 8.23 and 9 of HMRC's *Guidance on fuels for use in vehicles* (Excise Notice 75 published 12 March 2019) does indeed define when a tractor, as an 'excepted vehicle', may be used on public roads for activities relating to agriculture, horticulture or forestry, or for any of the other specified purposes. But it does not relate to a tractor towing a beaters' wagon on a farm, that is to say solely off road on private land, which I believe does not fall within the scope of the guidance.

However, I do agree that if a tractor were to tow a beaters' trailer even a short distance across public roads from one part of the farm land to another owned by the same person, then this would be use other than for agriculture, horticulture or forestry activities and the exemption that would normally apply to such use (1.5km) would not apply, and a tractor would have to use white diesel.

Peter RA Baker, Berkshire



The article on red diesel in the March issue

HERE TO HELP

The staff on *Sporting Gun* are a friendly bunch who welcome your letters and calls.

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Meet the team

FRAN ARDLEY

GUNDOGS

Owner of Tarncrag Gundog Training, with more than 10 years' experience.

NEIL MCINTOSH

VETERINARY

A keen shooter and a practising vet in Scotland.

TONY BRACCI

TUITION

Bisley Shooting Ground's deputy shooting manager and master gunfitter.

DAVID FROST

LEGAL

SG's legal expert and author of *Sporting Shooting and the Law*.

PETER THEOBALD

PIGEONS

Pigeon-shooting expert; author of *Woodpigeon: The Ultimate Quarry*.

ROBERT MORGAN

ANTIQUES

Arms and armour valuer at Holts Auctioneers.

ED COOK

RABBITS

Professional rabbit catcher working over 30,000 acres.

TOM SYKES

PEST CONTROL & WILDFOWLING

Sporting photographer, wildfowler and pest controller.

MARC BULL

COVER CROPS

Marc is our plant expert and is the Midlands and Eastern adviser at Bright Seeds.



Dogs can be trained not to take a retrieve from their partner

GUNDOGS

Take a lead on retrieves

I use two dogs in my picking-up team and quite often one will try to snatch a retrieve from the other dog. What can I do about this?

Fran says: Do some training with both dogs on a lead. Have them sitting up side by side and throw a dummy, insisting they sit as you do so. Remove the lead from the dog you wish to do the retrieve, telling the other "Not you". Send your dog but pay attention to the dog at heel, telling it to sit as your retrieving dog returns. Insist that the dog on a lead sits as you are taking the dummy and reward both

dogs for complying. Spend a few days having one dog retrieve only and giving the dog watching lavish praise and possibly a food reward when he's behaved; he needs to learn that good things happen to dogs that watch nicely as well. Every few throws, take both leads off and leave the dogs to sit and collect the dummy yourself, then reward them. If this is too much to start with, tie one dog up as you do the retrieve with the other, or use a stake or tether, always on a clip to collar lead, not a slip lead. Only when you have an excellent sit should you allow the non-retrieving dog to watch off lead.

SARAH FARNSWORTH, GETTY, RICHARD FAULKES

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RABBITS

Alternatives better than gas

Do you ever gas rabbits and is it an effective method of control?

Ed says: I have gassed rabbits but I have not been impressed with the results. We can certainly do a better job with ferrets and without all the risks

of non-target poisoning. Also, using gas is a highly expensive operation if carried out correctly, which often means alternatives are required. I am yet to see a rabbit job bettered by the various alternative methods when they are used properly.

LEGAL

Love thy neighbour

Is there a minimum legal distance that a Gun must be from a neighbouring property when a shot is fired? I am thinking particularly of cases where the neighbour may be opposed to shooting.

David says: No. This is mostly a matter of common sense rather than the law. However, if shot falls on a neighbouring property it counts as trespass and you could be liable for any damage that might be caused by it or a bird you had shot. It is important not to alienate neighbours and is good practice to visit them from time to time as good relations on the boundary are hugely important.

COVER CROPS

Play the long game

Why should I plant a game maize instead of, and at a different time from, my forage maize?

Marc says: Modern varieties of forage maize are bred to produce high yields in

time to be combined during September/October. This is the start of the shoot season when you want a crop to still be green. Using game maize planted later than forage maize means you get a stronger-standing and longer-lasting crop

(to the end of the season, with careful variety selection and management) compared with its modern forage sister varieties. Current forage varieties also tend to be more expensive due to breeding programmes.

Game maize should help to give you a longer-lasting crop





Putting a coat on your dog after a working day could prevent stiffness

GUNDOGS

Warm to the task

I have been told that if I put a coat on my cocker at the end of a day her fur will lose its 'weatherproofing'. Is this true?

Fran says: Whatever kind of shooting you undertake, your dog will be working hard. As such, make sure you give her

a good rub down (microfibre towels are excellent), both during lunch and at the end of the day, then put a good-quality

coat on her. This will not affect her fur in any way and it will help her feel more comfortable and prevent stiff joints in later life.



Select a gun that suits the discipline you want to shoot

TUITION

What gun to buy

I would like to buy a new gun but am not sure what to look for in the gun shop?

Tony says: The common criterion for most people is budget. So, first, look within your price range. Bear in mind, a shotgun can hold its value, especially if looked after, unlike most other sporting equipment. Second, you should be looking at suitability and fit. Is the gun made for the discipline you want to shoot? Fit is also important. As a rough guide, mount an empty gun with your eyes closed in your normal shooting stance. If your eye isn't looking straight down the rib as you open it, then the gun probably doesn't fit. Don't be coaxed into lifting your head or adjusting your stance to accommodate the gun. Third, I would stick to one of the known brands, which are popular because of their quality and reliability. If they do go wrong, parts are readily available and resale value and desirability are good.

Pigeon, possibly the finest quarry that flies

PIGEONS

Pigeon test the best

Pigeon shooting tests my skills as well as doing a valuable job of crop protection. I am on a high for days when it comes together. What about it keeps you doing it?

Peter says: I think you have answered your own question: the buzz you get from a successful outing lasts for days. Apart from providing a valuable pest-control service for farmers, the skill needed to make decent bags consistently can take a lifetime to learn. I have been pursuing them for 50 years and never tire of the challenge. I believe that they are the finest quarry that flies.

ANTIQUES

Light on resale value

I inherited this shotgun from my father. Could you tell me a little bit about it and let me know the value in case I want to sell it?

Robert says: Even non-shooters know the name Beretta. However, its Ultralight model is quite

specialist and I am afraid does not perform so well on the secondary market. Most buyers of over-and-under shotguns tend to want something that soaks up the recoil, either for high gamebirds or extensive bouts of clay shooting. The Ultralight was built to be carried a lot but shot little, though it has found favour with women and youngsters using light load cartridges. Despite the excellent condition, I would expect it only to achieve between £500 and £800 at auction.



What would this Beretta Ultralight fetch at auction?



Cereal mixtures can be planted in the spring

COVER CROPS

When to plant

How early can game cover be drilled?

Marc says: It depends on soil type, crop selection, the weather and seedbed conditions. Light land will warm up and dry out faster than heavy land. Cereal-based mixtures such as

our Early Bird can be planted after the commercial spring barley drillings. Maize, millet and sorghum need heat so are likely to be best drilled mid-May to mid-July. Brassica crops tend to be better planted later, so end of May to the end of August, depending on the species.

Keep on top of a dog's training during the off season

GUNDOGS

Jack of all trades

I like all aspects of shooting and working my dog but can a gundog really multitask?

Fran says: I think we should ask what you actually mean by multitask. Most gundog owners (me included) need their dogs to undertake a range of tasks in the field. One day they may be picking up or beating, the

next sitting at a peg or being shot over. It takes a lot of training throughout a dog's working life to ensure its discipline is kept at an acceptable level. I think picking up can be the undoing of many a well-trained dog. I know from experience that sweeping-up runners after a big drive and beating on a busy shoot can be the

quickest way to unsteady a dog, especially when you then take them out shooting on a walked-up day and expect them to stop to the flush and wait to be sent for a retrieve. If a gundog has been well-schooled in the basics and you keep on top of its training in the off season, there is no reason why your dog can't be a jack of all trades.

VERMIN

Prey for the crows

My local gun shop sells bird of prey decoys and says that they are great for crow shooting. Is this so?

Tom says: I have had a couple of owl decoys over the years that have worked when shooting crows. I am a member of a Swedish Facebook group called Crow World, which often shows owl decoys being used successfully. They seem to be common there. Crows often chase birds of prey, especially buzzards. It is a primitive urge that the crows have to see off predators that are often a bigger and more dangerous. Owl decoys are used to provoke this instinct and tempt the crows into mobbing the decoy.

Is the use of an owl decoy a wise move?

VETERINARY

Bulldog spirit

Everywhere I go there are people carrying French bulldogs about. Are there any labradors left?

Neil says: A look around our waiting room would give you the same impression but I guess that is because of the difference in general health of the breeds, with Brachycephalics (French bulldogs) suffering

from higher incidences of respiratory, orthopaedic, neurological and skin problems. Barring a brief spell when French bulldog puppy registrations exceeded those of labradors, the latter has retained the number one spot on the KC puppy registration chart for the past 10 years, though there have been many changes over that period. Visit: thekennelclub.org.uk



ANTIQUES

After a fashion

I am trying to help the family of a dear friend who passed away by valuing his shotguns for them. Can you help with this one?

Robert says: Over the years, Churchill has proved to be one of the more enduring English gun marques. However, the UK market seems to have turned its back on the traditional side-by-side. The trend is for longer barrels and heavier guns, mostly because of the style of game shooting today, with large bags being replaced by more testing birds at a higher level. Consequently, the cartridges being used tend to be higher pressure and higher velocity, painful to shoot and possibly damaging to older side-by-sides. Therefore, the stronger over-and-under guns tend to in favour at the moment. There is also a Sword of Damocles hanging over the shooting world at the moment in the form of non-toxic shot. The cheapest alternative to lead is steel and most English and other older guns won't be able to use it without modification and reproofing, whereas most modern over-and-unders are already steel-proofed. Therefore, in the current climate, your Churchill Regal would probably achieve at auction somewhere between the £1,200 to £1,600 mark. It is a testament to the quality and name that such guns have managed to sustain even at this level when most boxlocks now are languishing in the low hundreds.

TUITION

Switching can be hard

I recently bought a 20-bore although I already own and shoot a 12-bore. Is it possible to switch between the two guns seamlessly?

Tony says: It is unlikely that the two guns will handle in the same way. It's almost certain that the 20-bore will be lighter and handle a lot quicker than the heavier 12-bore. That's not to say you can't pick and choose which gun you use, but continually switching may have a detrimental effect on your consistency. It could take a little time to get accustomed to the gun you are using. There is an old saying: "Be aware of the man with

one gun." This alludes to the fact that if you have one gun for everything you are used to the gun and will shoot well with it. Whatever the type of shooting, the key is preparation and adjusting to the gun that you are going to use. Using one on one day and the other the next will be hard, but using one for the game season and the other for the summer should be fine after a period of adjustment.

VERMIN

Rule the roost

What shot and cartridges do you find best for roosting crows?

Tom says: Most of my roost shooting consists of trying to shoot low and agile jackdaws. I like to optimise my chances by using

something like a 30g No 6 in Gamebore Clear Pigeon or Black Gold. These seem to do the job well when shooting through an open choke at close range as the birds flight down a ride. If I were shooting birds at a bit more range, I would tighten the choke a little

to half and stick to the same shells, hoping that the larger number of pellets would give me the edge at striking a bird through the branches. It all depends on the shooting style and woodland you have. Experiment with different shells to find what suits you.



Try different shells to find out which are best for roost shooting

VERMIN

The way to outwit crows

I use a pigeon flapper for decoying woodies but wondered if it were possible to strap a crow to it and use it to decoy corvids?

Peter says: I have limited experience of shooting corvids but I find that leaving dead birds where they drop, rather than setting them up as decoys,

seems to work best. If crows can work out where the shooting is coming from, the flightline dries up. As for decoys, spinners only work if you can slow the machine right down with a speed control, so flappers are probably a better option. You generally have to work harder to outwit crows, so success, if it comes, tends to be sweeter.

VERMIN

No rat pack

A recent news report said that New Zealand had exterminated all of its rats. Do you think that would be worth doing on an island like Canna, where you have worked?

Ed says: New Zealand has removed all of its rats?! I can believe this. A company from New Zealand has made Canna rat free. All dead. The firm is really good at its job.

VETERINARY

A pregnant pause

After two apparently successful matings, both of which failed to produce a pregnancy, a friend has suggested surgical artificial insemination for my bitch. Any thoughts on this?

Neil says: Yes, plenty! First and foremost, to answer your question directly, surgical artificial insemination (AI), which requires general anaesthesia, abdominal incision and insertion of semen directly into the uterus, has been a prohibited procedure since February last year. Any veterinary surgeon found to be practising surgical AI is liable to face disciplinary action,

which would include being struck off. If you could find someone to do it, they would be a 'quack'. That is not to say that transvaginal and transcervical AI, which involve the use of a catheter to introduce semen, cannot still be carried out. More generally, bitches that fail to conceive should be investigated anatomically to assess for abnormalities and might benefit from progesterone testing around the time of ovulation to determine the optimum time for mating. This can be done on a simple blood test and many vets are able to do it 'in-house', with accurate results in minutes. I think a chat with your vet is in order.



Try a range of patterns and pitch when calling

VERMIN

It's your call

I see that you often use crow calls. Do you find that they work?

Tom says: Calling is a difficult one, regardless of the species. I often draw a blank but there are plenty of occasions when a little calling will help to turn birds or give them the extra encouragement to flight in range. Make sure your call is realistic and experiment with call patterns and pitch. I try a distress call when using owl decoys to give the illusion that something is wrong and to spur other birds to rush to its aid. Sometimes a mellow, long call gives the impression that your decoy spread is 'real' birds.

LEGAL

Cabinet reshuffle

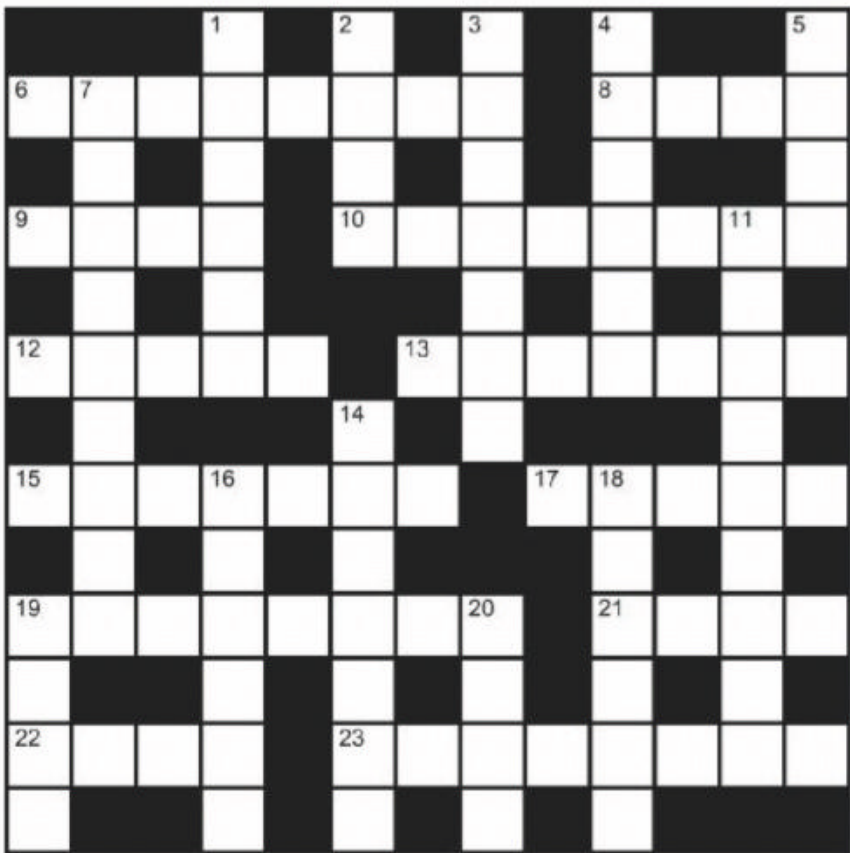
I have been advised to put my gun cabinet in the attic. What is your view on this?

David says: In the majority of houses the attic is not suitable. While it is out of sight of casual visitors most attics are difficult to access, thus there is a high risk the gun would not be put away immediately. Also, there can be wide variations in temperature and humidity in attics, neither of which is good for guns. Try to find a better place.

A blood test can determine the optimum time for mating

Win Terrific prizes!

April crossword



Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____ Vest size _____

Email address _____

By submitting your information, you agree to our Privacy Policy, available at: ti-media.com/privacy

CLUES ACROSS

- 6 A rifle type of recurring design? (8)
8 Engrave guns with laser or acid (4)
9 & 4 DOWN When hunting is very much on the calendar (4,6)
10 What type of bird is a Japanese Green? (8)
12 To a degree, it's a positional measure between shooter and target (5)
13 Early time of day for a wildfowling flight, perhaps (7)
15 Female dogs (7)
17 A crop that pigeons feed on (5)
19 Does an instinctive pull of the trigger require a photograph? (4,4)
21 See 1 down
22 _ quarry shooting, popular form of hunting game and wildfowl (4)
23 Shotgun permits (8)

CLUES DOWN

- 1 & 21 ACROSS A job in canine care (6,4)
2 _ whistle, gundog training tool (4)
3 Woody high point – possible nesting site (7)
4 See 9 across
5 Dull shooting noise indicative

MARCH ANSWERS

ACROSS 5. Loaders 7. Loops 9. Fabbri 10. Impact 11. Plough 12. NSRA
14. Shin 15. Anorak 17. Hoodie 18. Edible 19. Bench 20. Veining
DOWN 1. Focal 2. Articulated 3. Compensation 4. Spacers
6. Dabbling duck 8. High-powered 13. Whooper 16. Plane

CUT out the quiz coupon and send to: Sporting Gun Wordsearch, TI Media Ltd, Pinehurst 2, Pinehurst Road, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 7BF by **24 March 2020**. The first correct entry drawn will win.

WIN!



Skeet Vest RRP £59.99 Duffel Green sizes small-5XL (ladies' version also in Bitter Chocolate). This durable, lightweight cotton shooting vest has large front and rear pockets, reinforced shoulders and a mesh back.

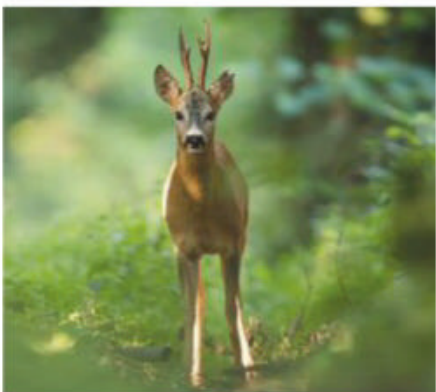


- of sound moderator usage (4)
7 Sound moderator chamber (9)
11 It describes any introduced species (3-6)
14 A widely prohibited type of trap (3-4)
16 A metal used for coating shot (6)
18 Not a cruel type of despatch (6)
19 A word we connect with loading and opening (4)
20 A parasite that transmits Lyme disease (4)

The unbelievable truth

Here are five facts about ROE DEER. See if you can identify the one that is **NOT TRUE** by putting a cross in the box next to the false statement.

- 1 The roe has delayed implantation: the fertilised egg does not implant into the uterus wall after mating but floats free in the uterus for months. ☐
- 2 Some roes have tiny canine teeth. ☐
- 3 Roes can be aggressive and have been known to attack people. ☐
- 4 Roe deer eat meat. ☐
- 5 A roe deer's young are called kids or fawns. ☐



WIN!

Napier Pro 9 ear defenders. Effective noise-cancelling headgear that works without batteries, electronics or any moving parts. Folds in half to fit in your pocket and incredibly comfortable to wear.



Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Email address _____

CUT out the quiz coupon and send to: Sporting Gun Wordsearch, TI Media Ltd, Pinehurst 2, Pinehurst Road, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 7BF by **24 March 2020**. The first correct entry drawn will win.

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Spot the target



BRIAN PHIPPS

On this picture, what the person is shooting at has been removed. Put an 'X' where you think the target is.

WIN!



Bisley Active Electronic Muffs give hearing protection and amplify non-harmful sounds.



WORTH £89.99

CUT out the quiz coupon and send to: Sporting Gun Wordsearch, TI Media Ltd, Pinehurst 2, Pinehurst Road, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 7BF by **24 March 2020**. The first correct entry drawn will win.

Name

Address

Postcode

Email address

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This month's wordsearch

WIN!

The classic-fit Aylsham fleece jacket worth

£104.95* (£99.95 ladies). Available in a variety of colours and sizes, with adjustable waist, zipped pockets and elasticated cuffs.

WORTH £104.95*

To get this fleece you need to find 12 words in the grid.



**SQUIRREL
RAT
CROW
MAGPIE
WOODPIGEON
RABBIT**

**BOLT
LURCHER
WHIPPET
NETS
HULL
CARTRIDGE**

Name

Address

Postcode Fleece size

Email address

L	S	T	E	N	T	W	F	H	W	E	X	P	R
R	E	E	X	X	H	B	M	O	V	A	C	H	E
Z	A	R	T	C	P	J	O	F	H	C	R	M	H
T	Y	B	R	E	G	D	I	R	T	R	A	C	C
A	X	M	B	I	P	C	E	M	T	O	K	B	R
R	S	N	A	I	U	D	R	E	J	W	O	R	U
D	I	L	G	Z	T	Q	P	M	Y	L	K	J	L
N	D	E	L	W	D	P	S	H	T	G	S	K	C
Z	O	H	P	U	I	B	V	R	S	D	V	L	J
N	J	M	O	H	H	B	Q	D	P	G	H	K	E
J	K	A	W	V	K	M	A	G	P	I	E	Y	U
P	E	M	V	Q	T	Z	E	K	Z	T	O	M	O
Z	G	L	Y	G	M	D	Y	E	X	C	H	V	M
H	K	S	G	Z	T	P	T	Z	E	G	P	G	H

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Last month's prize winners:

SPOT THE TARGET: Gwyn Llewellyn, Cardiff
CROSSWORD: Derek Booth, Nottingham
THE UNBELIEVABLE TRUTH: F. Shepherd, Cowden
WORDSEARCH: Richard Asher, Peterborough



RICHARD FAULKES

RECIPE

Tails of the unexpected

Rosie Barham cooks up a storm with a tasty squirrel recipe from her book *Delicious Vermin!*



Squirrel Fantastic
– a dish fit for the
poshest party

Thirty years ago we ate squirrel for two main reasons – first, there was a rule that nothing edible was ever wasted in our house; second, and probably more importantly, so the boys’ cars could be found easily in cinema car parks.

A squirrel tail tied to a radio aerial was a sure sign that the occupants of the vehicle were hunters who had gone to the pictures, plus they were showing respect to the

animal they had despatched because none of it went to waste. That’s what they told me, anyway.

Nowadays, squirrel is eaten in high-class restaurants – minuscule portions on white plates the size of Exmoor, the meat placed at an oblique angle and accompanied by a tower of other ‘exotic’ ingredients, with a couple of differently coloured splodges of *jus* dripped artistically around it.

Not really my kind of food – I prefer the rustic approach, but I tried to merge the old with the new and came up with this recipe. It turned out to be surprisingly tasty.

When it’s blowing a hoolie outside, this makes a comforting evening meal for two. If you’re really trendy you can pile all the components on top of each other and make it the *pièce de résistance* at a dinner party. Maybe not quite *haute cuisine*, but it’s close.

SQUIRREL FANTASTIC

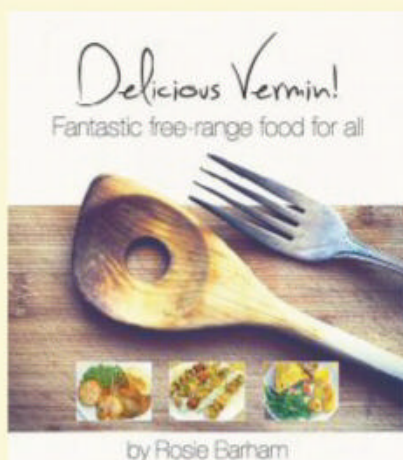
Ingredients

- Squirrel meat
- A very little oil – just to get the lardons going
- A small handful of lardons or chopped streaky bacon
- Sliced shallots
- Mushrooms
- A pint of liquid made up, 50-50, of chicken stock and white wine
- A couple of sprigs of fresh thyme
- Black pepper
- Soured cream to add at the last minute

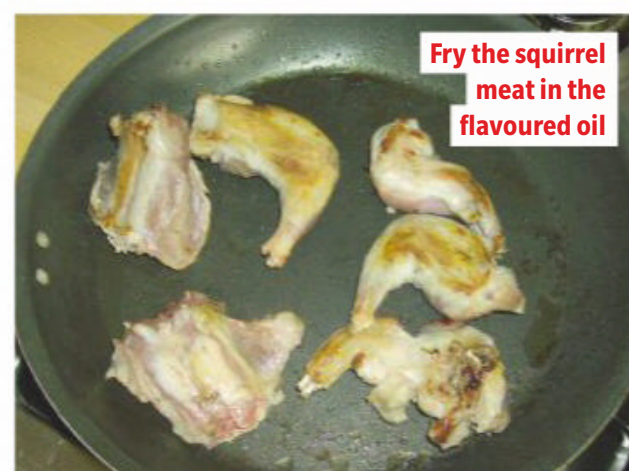


You only need a few ingredients

Delicious Vermin by Rosie Barham is available from calmproductions.com, Amazon, or email Rosie at rosemary173@btinternet.com if you would like a signed copy.



- 1** Add lardons to a pan and fry for a couple of minutes to release the fat, then remove and set aside.
- 2** Brown the squirrel meat in the now flavoured oil and then place it into an ovenproof dish. Sprinkle the lardons over the top. Add the sliced shallots, mushrooms, thyme, stock, wine and black pepper.
- 3** Cover tightly with foil and cook in the oven for an hour and a half at 180°C.
- 4** Check that the meat is tender; if it isn’t, cook for a further half an hour.
- 5** Now turn off the oven, remove the dish, and let it cool for five minutes. If you don’t do this, it could well curdle and you’ll have to sieve the gravy – never a great thing to do if anyone is watching. Then mix in about two tablespoonsful of soured cream.
- 6** Return the dish to the oven to continue cooking through gently while you attend



to the potatoes that you started to cook 20 minutes previously.

- 7** Drain the potatoes, add a dollop of the soured cream, salt and pepper to taste, and pound the living daylights out of them.
- 8** Place the creamed potatoes on a plate and then arrange the braised squirrel mixture. Drizzle the sauce over the top. ■



New gear

Top jackets for spring shooting along with other handy items for the field new to the market this month



Seeland Skeet Softshell Jacket

Following the huge success of the Winstar range, Seeland is now introducing the Skeet Softshell jacket, with a Seetex membrane to keep you warm and dry during the spring shooting season.

Price £94.99

Seeland.com

Browning Prevent Field Jacket

The latest jacket from Browning is windproof, waterproof and breathable. It has places for Reactar G2 anti-recoil pads as well as a large game pocket, making it one of the most practical shooting jackets on the market. Comes in sizes S to XL.

Price £169

Browning.eu

Bison Ankle Boots

This ankle boot is practical, comfortable and easy to slip on and off. Its rubber sole absorbs shocks and its quick-drying, resistant lining keeps moisture at bay. The boots are made of a natural rubber, a mix exclusive to Aigle; they are waterproof, comfortable, flexible and resilient.

Price £70

Aigle.com



Harkila Stornoway Active Jacket

The Stornoway Active jacket with an HWS membrane for ultimate waterproofness and breathability now comes in printed tweed.

Price £369.99

Harkila.com



Lokaway LB Range gunsafe

This new range of outstanding value safes is lightweight but offers the same build quality and secure locking system as other safes. Featuring the advanced, anti-pry, 'Swing 'n' Slide' locking system, the ultra-secure LB range comes with a high security lock and removable shelf compartment.

Price from £225

Gmk.co.uk



Deerhunter Maple Trousers

Ideal for a day on the trails or country walk, these trousers deliver effortless style. An adjustable, partially elasticated waist offers comfort and there are multiple pockets for essentials.
Price £84.99
Deerhunter.eu



Granviri Utility Jacket

A lightweight utility jacket perfect for summer shooting, with large pockets to store cartridges and essentials. Waterproof, windproof yet breathable, it will be your go to.
Price £170
Aigle.com



Toul boot

This boot is water resistant and has 2.2mm leather with a Goodyear welted constructed sole unit for durability. The exclusive outsole gives constant mud clearance, with a phylon midsole for comfort.
Price £150
royal-scot.co.uk



Swazi's Adventure Socks

Made in Swazi's New Zealand factory, these are made for the outdoors. There's extra padding around the heel and toe plus an elasticated arch to hold them in place. Sizes: XS-4XL
Price £19.95
swazi.co.nz



The Stoeger XM1

This is the first PCP airgun from Stoeger. All surfaces are designed with a clear attention to ergonomic and anatomic functionality. The innovative Italian design by Stoeger airguns is immediately recognisable. Available in .177 and .22 with a 3-9x40 scope, two mounts and a sound moderator.
Price £395
intl.stoegerairguns.com

Latest kit

GEAR



AT A GLANCE

- 1 Schöffel Country Cotton French Rib in Sage
Price £79.95; schoffelcountry.com
- 2 Farlows Cord Trousers
Price £109; farlows.co.uk
- 3 Schöffel Country Christopher Chino in Dark Sand
Price £89.95; schoffelcountry.com



In the field

A team of shooters help **The Editor** test a Hull cartridge, plus two dog products

Hull Ultimate Twenty cartridges

We tested these cartridges through a number of guns over the season. They were put through side-by-sides and over-and-unders; used on driven and walked-up days. Our panel of five included both men and women of different shapes and sizes.

First we tested the cartridges for perceived recoil. After all, many people use a 20-bore because of the relatively low recoil. As you would expect, recoil was less noticeable on the over-and-unders because of the guns' extra mass. Nevertheless, most of the side-by-side users said the recoil was well managed with this cartridge; only one said the recoil was a little sharp for him. He is used to a lighter load and a slower cartridge, so the Ultimate Twenty seemed a bit more "punchy" to him.

With a velocity of 1450fps, this is a fairly 'fast' cartridge. A lot of people like cartridges that get the pellets to the target quickly. They feel that this means you need to allow less lead and shooting becomes more instinctive. In reality, a cartridge that is a little slower



Details

- **Bore: 20**
- Shot size: 4.5 or 5.5 (tested)
- **Wad: fibre**
- Case length: 2.75in
- **Velocity: 1450fps**



won't make that much difference to lead as you are talking about a shot pattern the size of a bicycle wheel. All our shooters said that the Ultimate Twenty was fast.

The cartridge patterned well, producing a dense pattern that no bird could fly through and survive. This is partly due to the high-quality shot, is carefully quality controlled so that it is spherical and flies true. Our testers said that the cartridge had 'stopping power' when it came to game. Even high driven birds fell to the Ultimate Twenty.

Many cartridges now come with high brass. On some guns this can cause ejection problems. However, these cartridges had low brass so are more likely to be ejected from the breech cleanly.

The Ultimate Twenty uses a fibre wad, as you would expect on a game cartridge because it's kinder to the environment. The only downside our testers found was that they would have liked more choice in shot load and size. Some wanted a lighter load and others wanted heavier loads. I would say that 28g is about right for game shooting with a 20-bore. If you go heavier, the amount of recoil increases, which defeats the object of shooting a 20-bore in many ways.

Overall, our testers liked the Hull Cartridge Ultimate Twenty. It is a refined cartridge with great stopping power and keeps recoil at a minimum. It was also noted that it was a clean cartridge because the barrels required minimal scrubbing after using them.

SPECS

➔ Price: £343 per thousand ➔ For more information visit: hullcartridge.co.uk ➔ Reviewer: Matt Clark

The Heel Helper

I have always been keen to buy British, especially hand-made products. I know you may have to pay a bit more than imported goods but you can be assured that the quality is going to be good and the product will last.

ActiveK9 Designs has been making high-quality leads and whistle lanyards for many years, but it was the firm's new product that caught my eye. The Heel Helper is, in essence, a short slip lead with a traditional Celtic knot at the end so the lead can be easily held on to. When training a dog to walk to heel you would get to the stage where you would wrap the lead around the dog's neck, so it thinks it is still connected to the handler. All too often the lead ends up coming undone and tripping up the dog. The Heel Helper overcomes this. When ready to

make the transition, swap to the Heel Helper, walk the dog at heel whilst holding on to the knot and, when ready, simply let go. The dog thinks it is still attached to the handler. Trials have shown that dogs ignore the knot as it is lighter and less obtrusive than a plastic toggle, which can bang against the dog.

The Heel Helper can also be used when steadying a dog to thrown retrieves and also as an intermediate training aid when teaching a sit stay, especially on a place board. The leads are small enough to stick in a pocket and are made from PPM cord (polypropylene multifilament), which is smooth to touch, low weight, weather resistance and has a high breaking load. The Heel Helper can be made in various colours and will be available in different lengths to suit all sizes of dogs.



SPECS ➔ Price: £10 incl post and packaging ➔ activeK9designs.co.uk ➔ Reviewer: Nick Ridley

YuMOVE Plus and YuMOVE Working Dog

Last summer we lost our 16-year-old cocker, Sweep. In her later years she suffered with her back legs and we started to look at something that would help. Our

vet recommended we try a supplement to help ease her stiff joints. Now I am not one who is easily taken in by 'marketing claims' but I had heard some good things about



SPECS ➔ Price: from £21 and £82.90 ➔ yumove.co.uk ➔ Reviewer: Nick Ridley

this particular product and so we started her on YuMOVE Plus and, I have to say, over time the results were quite impressive. At her age she was never going to be running around like a spring lamb but her mobility certainly improved.

When we lost her, we had some tablets left over so I suggested we use them on Harry, who was approaching 12 years old. Harry has worked hard during his life and although we have always fed him a good diet, dried him and put a coat on him at the end of a shoot day, he was getting a bit stiff, especially in his back legs.

Last season I used him for one of our walked-up shoot days. He worked all day in quite hard going cover and I was convinced he would be as stiff as a board the following morning. I was surprised when he came bounding up to me in the morning, ready to go again.

Our gundogs work hard for us and after many years of testing work in wet, cold conditions they deserve a bit of help in their old age. It has been good to find a product that, quite simply, does what it says on the tin.

YuMOVE can be purchased directly from yumove.co.uk; look out for regular promotional discounts.

The gold standard

This year's Shooting Awards were fiercely contested – testament to the efforts that go into creating products that meet the shooting world's standards

SCOPES

GOLD

■ HAWKE FRONTIER 30SF5-30x56

The judges were mightily impressed by the Hawke Frontier as a mid-range scope. The quality of image it provided when out foxing was comparable to other kit on sale at a far higher price.

SILVER

- Minox ZE5i 3-15x56mm

BRONZE

- GPO Evolve 6-24x50mm



SCOPES

SHOOTING AWARDS

GOLD

FINALISTS

- Hawke Airmax 2-7x32 airgun scope

NIGHT VISION

GOLD

■ PULSAR THERMION XM50

RIFLESCOPE

■ YUKON PHOTON RT 4.5x42S



NIGHT VISION

SHOOTING AWARDS

GOLD

The judges agreed that the Yukon scope was easy to set up and it was useful that its functions can be switched off independently when not needed. The Pulsar won praise for its simplicity.



NIGHT VISION

SHOOTING AWARDS

GOLD

SILVER

- Sightmark Wraith day/night 4-32x50



BINOCULAR

SHOOTING AWARDS

GOLD

BINOCULAR GOLD

■ PULSAR ACCOLADE XP50

The Pulsar Accolade XP50 thermal-imaging binocular impressed the judges. The X-shaped layout of the button control was more comfortable to use than the older in-line style, plus the small cut-out to fit the bridge of the nose was considered a clever design. The sensor is of the highest quality, ensuring fantastic image definition, and it boasts a fully waterproof IPX7 rating.

SILVER

- Hawke Nature-Trek 10x42

STALKING

GOLD
■ SCHULTZ AND LARSEN CLASSIC SYNTHETIC

The judges deemed this rifle to be everything most deerstalkers who are looking for durability would want. Its accuracy was said to be “off the charts”.



SILVER
● Tikka T3X Cerakote

BRONZE
● Chapuis Armes Rols Elegance

SEMI-AUTO



GOLD
■ BERETTA A400 UPLAND
■ WINCHESTER SX4 WATERFOWL HUNTER

The Beretta (pictured top) handled well and recycled a wide range of cartridges. The judges thought the Winchester (pictured above) had great handling and represents a lot of gun for the money.

SILVER
● Breda B3.5SM

GAME GUN



GOLD
■ BROWNING 525 EXQUISITE
■ CHAPUIS ARMES C135 ARTISAN

The Browning (pictured top) had all the hallmarks of an extremely reliable gun, while the Chapuis handled incredibly.

SILVER
● AYA Legend de Luxe

BRONZE
● Miroku MK60 English Field

PEST CONTROL RIFLE

GOLD
■ CZ 457 ROYAL .17 HMR



SILVER
● Ruger American Target .22 LR Laminate

BRONZE
● Tikka T1x MTR

There was no doubting the accuracy of this elegant CZ and, as its regal name suggests, it behaved with impeccable manners.

CLAY

GOLD
■ BROWNING 525 SPORTER LAMINATED

The judges thought this was impressively styled with superb handling.

SILVER
● Beretta DT11

BRONZE
● Yildiz Pro Sporter





CLAY CARTRIDGES

GOLD (BY PUBLIC VOTE)
■ GAMEBORE WHITE GOLD

Gamebore’s unique diamond shot prevents pellets clumping and these cartridges pattern extremely well.



- SILVER
- Hull Sporting 100

- BRONZE
- Eley Hawk VIP Steel Pro Eco Wad (Clay)

GAME CARTRIDGES

GOLD (BY PUBLIC VOTE)
■ GAMEBORE CLEAR PIGEON

This high-performance cartridge gives superb patterns at a competitive price.



- SILVER
- Eley Hawk VIP Steel Pro Eco Wad (Game)

- BRONZE
- Hull Partridge Cartridge

SHOOTING ACCESSORIES



GOLD
■ HÄRKILA HEAT WAISTCOAT

The judges thought this heated waistcoat was a brilliant use of new technology to make life more comfortable.

- SILVER
- Pro Ferrum wet drying gun oil

- BRONZE
- Slippery Dick’s gun wax

- FINALISTS
- Britbore Mop
 - Seeland Buckthorn gaiters
 - Hawke LRF 600 Laser Range Finder Pro
 - Jack Pyke Weardale jacket
 - JetWet portable power washer

BEST GUN SHOP

GOLD (BY PUBLIC VOTE)
■ SPORTSMAN GUN CENTRE

Our winner, by a wide margin, offers a great choice of guns, ammunition, accessories and clothing at affordable prices, with fast service and great staff.



- SILVER
- Gilsans of Yorkshire
- BRONZE
- Ian Coley Sporting

COATS



Shooting Awards

FOOTWEAR

FOOTWEAR

SHOOTING
AWARDS

GOLD

GOLD

■ ALPINA HUNTER
HEATED BOOT■ CHAMEAU-LITE LCX
10in BOOT

The Alpina Hunter heated boots (pictured right) are as advanced as boots get but cost the same as a good pair of normal boots. The judges agreed the Vibram sole was decent and that offer good support.



FOOTWEAR

SHOOTING
AWARDS

GOLD

The Chameau-Lites (pictured left) are brilliant boots that can be worn when stalking hinds in the snow or in a woodland scenario in the spring.

BRONZE

- Alan Paine leather waterproof shooting long boot

FINALISTS

- Gateway1 Pheasant Game 5mm neoprene-lined wellington boot
- Dedito Moorland boot

GOLD

■ PERCUSSION NORMANDIE
3-IN-1 JACKET

■ SASTAMEHTO PRO 2.0

The judges deemed the Normandie 3-in-1 (pictured right) and Mehto Pro 2.0 (pictured left) jackets to be among the toughest and most practical models available on the market.



COATS

SHOOTING
AWARDS

GOLD

SILVER

- Le Chameau LCM5 Insulated field jacket

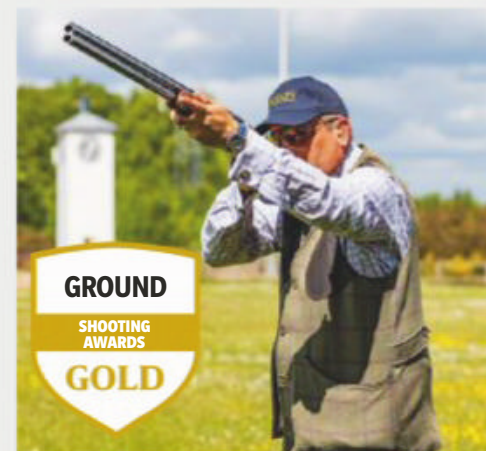
BRONZE

- Alan Paine Axford coat

GROUND

GOLD (BY PUBLIC VOTE)

■ BISLEY SHOOTING GROUND



GROUND

SHOOTING
AWARDS

GOLD

The home of British shooting, Bisley Shooting Ground emerged as a clear winner. Fans say the instruction is first-rate, the grounds are superb and the clubhouse has excellent facilities. The Long Siberia pay-and-play range was also a firm favourite.

SILVER

- Ian Coley Sporting

BRONZE

- EJ Churchill

FINALISTS

- Bywell
- West London Shooting School
- Dovey Valley Shooting Ground
- Ladyswood Shooting School
- Grimsthorpe Estate
- Holland & Holland Shooting Ground
- The Oxford Gun Company



Winchester SX4 semi-auto 20-bore

The editor tests the latest 20-bore version of the Winchester SX4 Waterfowl Hunter



We tested the 12-bore SX4 last year and were very impressed by its fast-cycling action and superb handling.

Now the company has introduced a new 20-bore version of the semi-auto with a few improvements.

First and foremost the gas-operated mechanism includes an active valve that vents gasses both upwards and forwards from the Quadra vent ports in the fore-end when using heavy loads such as magnum cartridges. This also regulates bolt speed.

The advantage of a gas-operated gun is that it is not cartridge fussy and will cycle anything, regardless of shot weight. The system on the SX4 is engineered well and worked effectively. Two vents in the barrel drive down an over-sized piston in a gas collar to operate the working parts.

Enclosed design

The only drawback to a gas-operated system is that you have to make sure all the gas parts are clean to keep them operating. However, the makers say that an enclosed design helps to reduce fouling and improves reliability with cleaner operation. That said, it's good practice to keep the gas parts clean.

Another innovation that is fitted only on 20-bore SX4 models is Winchester's 'speed

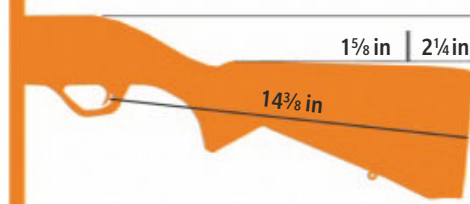
loading' system that loads the first cartridge directly into the chamber without using the bolt. This is useful if you get among the action and need to reload quickly.

The model we tested was the Waterfowl Hunter version that came with a synthetic stock with a camo pattern. You either love or hate camo and many UK fowlers will think it is a bit too yellow for our wetlands, but there are black (Composite) and walnut

Many thanks to The Oxford Gun Company for hosting this test. The Oxford Gun Company, Jericho Farm, Oxford Road, Oakley, Buckinghamshire HP18 9RG, tel 01844 238308, www.oxfordguncompany.co.uk

IN DETAIL

Price:	RRP £948
Weight:	6¾lb
Barrel:	28in (tested) 26in
Length of pull:	14⅜ in
Drop: Comb	1⅝ and 2¼ at heel
Rib:	ventilated



INFO

Available in 12 and 20-bore • Gas operated semi-auto • Truglo sights • Inflex recoil pad • Camo, walnut and black



Up close

1. The gas-operated mechanism includes an active valve that vents gasses both upwards and forwards from the Quadra vent ports in the fore-end
2. Slightly garish camo is not to everyone's taste, but a black synthetic stock is available



“The shots go off as quickly as you can pull the trigger”

EDITOR'S VERDICT

The 20-bore Winchester SX4 is a delightful gun. It handles well, can fire off rounds as quick as you can pull the trigger and is extremely comfortable to shoot. It would suit anyone who wants to spare their shoulders from punishment and would make a great pigeon gun. It offers serious value for money because it is so robust, well engineered and reliable. If you bought it you would not be disappointed.

SCORES ON THE DOORS

Build quality	23/25
Handling	25/25
Styling	21/25
Value for money	25/25

Total: 94/100

(Field) stocked versions available as well, the cheapest one being the Composite at £878.

For a fowling gun a synthetic stock is ideal. It doesn't warp with the wet, it is wipe-clean and it's also robust. The barrel and action are also coated with a camo finish, which will help protect it from the elements. The stock was ergonomic and the grip, though a little slender, gave good control over the gun. There are also studs on the stock so a sling can be easily fitted.

Three chokes come with the gun which are quarter, half and three-quarters, and there are spacers to extend the length of pull by up to half an inch. This is useful because at

14³/₈in the length of pull is quite short. That said, you would be wearing lots of bulky clothing on the foreshore, which would have the effect of making the length of pull longer. It must be noted, however, that there were no shims to change the drop or cast.

Light

At just over 6lb the gun is rather light, which makes lugging it round much easier. Usually the drawback of a light gun is more perceived recoil, especially with heavy load cartridges. However, the action of a semi-auto usually takes the sting out of the tail when using punchy loads. I tried the gun with up to 28g cartridges and the recoil was minimal, which was also thanks to the spongy Inflex II recoil pad.

When it came to shooting the 20-bore SX4 I was impressed by how quickly the action cycled. The shots go off as quickly as you can pull the trigger. And, thanks to it being gas rather than inertia operated you could cycle loads as light as 21g through the gun.

Handling was superb. Being a 20-bore you expect the gun to be wieldy, but the pistol grip and fore-end gave good control of the gun and felt nice in the hand. It was also well-balanced with the weight a little forward of the trigger-guard. My only criticism would be that the comb of the stock was rather low for me, but then we are all made differently.

I liked the large safety and cocking-handle release, which would be easy to operate if you were wearing gloves on the foreshore. Some might say the trigger pull is heavy, but again if you are wearing gloves or your hands are numb with cold this is not a bad thing and will save an accidental discharge.

There was very little barrel flip even with a relatively short barrel (28in) and it was a very comfortable gun to shoot. All this would make it great on a busy pigeon day because the short barrel is less likely to get caught on the netting of your hide and even if you shot the SX4 all day you wouldn't have shoulder ache. ■

CARTRIDGES

Eley Hi-Flyer 28g, No 6 with fibre wads.
Tel: 0121 352 3277 or visit eleyhawklttd.com

version available ➔ Winchesterint.com



Terry swings the lightweight SX4 easily into action

Smooth operator

Our readers rate the Winchester SX4 in 20-bore

The Winchester SX4 has built a reputation for being a well-made reliable semi-auto that offers great value for money. Now it's available in a 20-bore version, which is largely a scaled down version of its 12-bore stablemate. Our reader testers have owned semi-autos in the past, but now prefer over-and-unders. What will they think of the Winchester?

Steve is first to pick up the gun and notices how light it is. "I'm used to a 12-bore, so the 20-bore SX4 seems very light. You could carry it all day. It also comes up to the shoulder easily, which would make for quick target acquisition."

Lightning

He loads up the gun putting two cartridges in the magazine and one in the breech, then calls for the first clay. He shatters that one and subsequent clays. Not bad considering Steve has never shot this gun before and usually shoots an over-an-under. "This gun moves like lightning. It's easy to get it on target and the barrels moves easily without

Sporting Gun testers

STEVE WANT

Occupation: Retired geologist

Years shooting: Two

Guns: Fausti XF4, Miroku 7000 and AYA Yeoman

Type of shooting: Mainly clay

TERRY FRIEND

Occupation: Retired

Years shooting: 20

Guns: Beretta 690, Nikko Shadow 7

Type of shooting: Clays and pigeons



any effort, which enabled me to shoot three clays in succession. It's quite a change from my 12-bore clay gun," says Steve.

Terry was next to try the SX4 on some clays. "I'm also used to a 12-bore, but I feel quite at home with the 20. With some semi-autos you can feel the cocking handle coming back towards your face, but I wasn't aware of the moving parts on the Winchester because the action was so smooth," says Terry.

Effortless

Both agree that the SX4 is a fast-handling gun. Movement is effortless thanks to its light weight and recoil is well managed. But what about the stock dimensions? Steve and Terry are both well over 6ft, so how does the rather short length of pull make the gun feel?

Terry says: "It feels fine for me. I don't feel that it is short and I am shooting well with it."

Steve agrees. "I usually prefer quite a long stock, but the length of pull on the SX4 is fine. If it were mine I might add a few spacers to make it a bit longer."

When asked whether the trigger pull was too heavy, Terry says it feels fine for him. "It's

CARTRIDGES

Eley Hi-Flyer 28g, No 6 with fibre wads. Tel: 0121 352 3277 or visit eleyhawk ltd.com

not as refined as the trigger on my Beretta but I still like it. Besides, if you are in a pigeon hide or on the foreshore, the chances are you will be wearing gloves."

Steve adds: "I love the safety-bolt release buttons because they are easy to use with my big hands and could be easily operated when wearing gloves."

Is there anything the pair don't like about the Winchester SX4? In a word, no. "I like the whole package," says Terry. "Everything about it is great and I am not a big fan of semi-autos. This is the only one I would buy, even in 20-bore."

Steve is also taken by the Winchester. "Like Terry I am not a great fan of semi-autos – in my experience they go wrong quite a lot. However, the SX4 seems well made and is a joy to shoot. I'd buy one." ■

Many thanks to The Oxford Gun Company for hosting this test. The Oxford Gun Company, Jericho Farm, Oxford Road, Oakley, Bucks, HP18 9RG, tel 01844 238308, www.oxfordguncompany.co.uk



Steve Want brings the Winchester SX4 up effortlessly to smash three clays in a row

DAVID SAYS:

"For value for money and reliability the Winchester SX4 can't be beaten. It is a superb little gun in 20-bore and you could fire it all day without any ill-effect, though personally I'd go for the 12-bore. With large controls for use with gloved hands it would make a good fowling gun but it would be equally at home on pigeons"



David Florent is managing director and head shooting instructor at The Oxford Gun Company.



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**Stock**

The stock comes in a variety of options including walnut and laminate

Action

The bolt has twin extractors to ensure positive removal

Speed merchant

Charles Smith-Jones runs his rule over the Browning T-Bolt, a rifle that stands out from the crowd

The T-Bolt is something a little different. At first glance it is just another bolt action .22 rimfire. However, closer examination of this gun, designed by Browning and made in Belgium by Fabrique Nationale, reveals otherwise.

For starters, it has a straight-pull action, placing it among a select group of small bores employing this mechanism rather than a more usual turn bolt. Most of these are intended for the winter sport of biathlon, which combines cross-country skiing and

shooting, where speed is of the essence. But the T-Bolt is firmly a sporting rifle.

The straight-pull can be something of a 'Marmite' bolt action that you either love or hate, but there is no denying that it offers a speed advantage when cycling fresh rounds into the chamber.

The bolt handle stands out at a right angle to the side of the action with a cross-bolt that locks into both sides of the receiver. A simple pull back and push forward of the bolt ejects the spent cartridge and reloads a new one cleanly and effortlessly.

Well received

This idea has always held a special appeal among shooters in countries where semi-automatic .22s were regulated. The reality is the straight-pull still does not match the speed of a semi-automatic and you may encounter the additional drawback of losing the sight picture when cycling the bolt.

The T-Bolt was certainly well-received when it was introduced in 1965 and quickly



The straight-pull bolt works smoothly

built up a fanbase, so it came as something of a surprise when Browning decided to discontinue it nine years later. There was a brief revival of the model in the 1980s, followed by a redesign and relaunch in 2006, since when it has been continuously available in a number of formats.

The original model came only in .22 LR, featuring a plain walnut stock with a lacquered finish, 24in barrel, a peep rear sight and a ramped blade for a front sight, and a five-round, stacked-clip magazine. A deluxe version, designated the T-2, followed a year after the original launch but differed only cosmetically with higher-grade wood and more ornate chequering, while



A moderator is often fitted to later guns



Magazine
The flush Double Helix magazine takes 10 rounds

Moderator
Later models were screw-cut for a sound moderator

CHARLES SMITH-JONES SAYS:
The straight-pull action places it among a select group of small bores

Tech specs

Country of origin	United States
In production	1965-1974, re-introduced briefly in the late 1980s. New version, 2006 to present
Action	Bolt
Stock options	Multiple
Barrel length	16½in to 24in
Magazine	Detachable
Left-hand version	Yes
Weight	5lb approx (wooden stock with standard barrel)
Available in calibres	.22 LR New version also available in .17 HMR
Cost new	£525 (Browning T-Bolt Composite Sporter)
Cost used	From around £250, depending on age and condition

the stock of the later 1980s reintroduction was oil-finished. The action has always been machined from steel-bar stock, and the receiver drilled and tapped for scope mounts. The two-position safety catch is tang-mounted, located above the pistol grip in a natural position for thumb operation without any need to change the firer’s hold. Browning triggers tend to be crisp without a reputation for creep and the T-Bolt is no

exception. Although factory settings are often higher than most shooters prefer, the pressure can be adjusted externally. This can be done with either a screwdriver or an Allen key, depending on the age of the gun, and without any need to separate the action from the stock.

Relaunch

Although there was little change to the action, one of the major features of the new T-Bolt when it was relaunched in 2006 was a new and more innovative magazine to replace the old single-stacking design. Called the Double Helix by Browning, it featured two spring-loaded rotary arrangements sitting on top of each other, which look something like a number 8 when viewed from the front. It is a strong, reliable and compact system that enables 10 rounds to be loaded, feeding positively every time, and is probably the highest capacity, flush-fitting magazine available in any commercially made rifle. More recent models with composite stocks even have a recess in the butt that allows a spare magazine to be carried.



The straight-pull bolt allows for rapid fire



The butt has a slot for a spare magazine

Since 2006 the T-Bolt has moved a long way from the wooden stock and blued barrel of its predecessors. There have been wooden, laminate and composite versions in various configurations, designed to appeal to small-game hunters, pest controllers, target shooters or young shooters, according to style and size. Unsurprisingly, earlier models will not have left the factory screw-cut for a moderator, although this will often have been done later, and Browning has offered pre-cut barrels as standard for some years. The T-Bolt is a strong, compact and accurate rifle that will appeal to many people. They are frequently encountered on the used gun racks and even the older models are well worth considering. ■

Many thanks to Sportsman Gun Centre, 19 Apple Lane, Exeter, EX2 5GL, tel 01392 354, sportsmanguncentre.co.uk

**Stock**

French walnut with a high-quality finish

Action

Automatic ejectors are standard

Two of a kind

Charles Smith-Jones looks at the Classic Doubles 101, a shotgun with an excellent pedigree

Classic Doubles International is an interesting if short-lived brand with a somewhat complex background. In 1931 the Western Cartridge Company, owned by the Olin family and destined to become one of the richest in the US thanks to ammunition sales in World War II, bought Winchester.

Eventually renamed as Olin International, the company went on to diversify into a wide range of products including plastics, mining, chemicals and skiing equipment. At one point it employed roughly 35,000 people and operated 63 plants in the US and abroad.

Change

In 1980 Olin started to move away from firearms manufacturing following a conviction for supplying embargoed firearms to South Africa and eventually sold the Japanese factory, which was producing its Winchester-branded guns, in 1987. It was bought by a newly formed company, Classic Doubles International, which continued to manufacture what was effectively the Winchester 101

over-and-under shotgun using virtually the same staff, equipment, processes and designs but rebranded as the Classic Doubles 101.

At the same time it also introduced a boxlock side-by-side as the Model 201 and focused its efforts primarily on these two guns. Production did not last long, though, and ceased after only two years or so after sales proved insufficient to support the newly formed company, which went bankrupt in 1990.

Olin, in the meantime, has continued to produce ammunition and, in a further twist, entered into an agreement to market Winchester shotguns and rifles in 2006.

To all intents and purposes the Classic Doubles 101 is a Winchester 101, having a virtually identical mechanism, and most of the parts are interchangeable. Cosmetically it looks slightly different and many people believe that it is in fact the better gun

of the two. It was produced in a number of versions prefixed by Classic: the Field in two grades, Sporter, Trap, Skeet and Waterfowler. Combo versions with



The fore-end features strong chequering

The action is either blued or white metal



Rib
The barrels feature a ventilated rib

CHARLES SMITH-JONES SAYS:
“The company was aiming to achieve a reputation for attention to detail”

a second set of barrels were sometimes offered for the Sporter and Trap, and the Skeet also came with an option of four sets of barrels. They were made in all gauges from 12-bore to .410, apart from a 16-bore.

Quality

The finish and woodwork are generally of a very high quality. The French walnut stock is strongly chequered, although the nature of this can vary from model to model and often features a combination of American and English design styles.

The metalwork of the boxlock action is either of blued or white metal. Engraving can vary considerably between the relatively plain to ornate and although much has been completed by machine there is usually at

least some degree of hand finishing. The Classic Doubles name is almost invariably featured on the base of the action.

The overall effect is an elegant and tastefully finished gun. The monobloc and other aspects of the internal metalwork, visible only when the gun is broken, are usually highly jewelled compared with the plainer finishes of other manufacturers, and show the company was aiming to achieve a reputation for attention to detail.

Barrels feature a ventilated rib and are usually clearly stamped with the name of the shotgun model and the US nationality of the manufacturer, despite being made in Japan.

Automatic ejectors and a single selective trigger are standard. The 101 balances and handles very well, having a solid, confidence-



Engraving on the boxlock action can vary from plain to ornate, with hand finishing

Tech specs

Configuration	Over-and-under
Action	Boxlock
Choke	Fixed or multi
Chamber	2¾in or 3in
Barrel length	25½in, 28in or 30in
Safety catch	Manual or auto
Ejector/non ejector	Ejector
Trigger	Single selective
Weight (12-bore)	7lb 12oz
Available in calibres	12, 20, 28-bore and .410
Cost new	N/A
Cost used	From around £400 depending on model and condition, though good examples can more than double this



Extra sets of barrels were an option

inspiring feel. It is without doubt a well-made gun that inherited an excellent pedigree. Another plus is that because of the close relationship to its Winchester precursor, obtaining spares is not a major problem. If you are lucky, it may even come with its original factory hard case. All 101s will now be around 30 years old and are unlikely to be proofed for use with steel shot.

As a result of the short production run caused by Classic Doubles’ early demise as a going concern, the guns are not encountered often and can be highly sought after, even if only for their curiosity value. Don’t discount the 101 though, as it is a fine, reliable shotgun that ceased to be made only because not enough were sold. A good example is unlikely to stay on the gun dealer’s racks for very long. ■

Many thanks to Sportmand Gun Centre, 19 Apple Lane, Exeter, EX12 5GL, tel 01392 354854, sportsmanguncentre.co.uk

Roll out (all) the 18 barrels

Robert Morgan delights in a multi-barrelled revolver that is as eye-catching as it is intimidating

We have looked at multi-barrelled antique guns before in these pages, especially those from the Victorian era, and one showed up the other day that I simply had to share with you.

As pepperbox revolvers go, the one shown here has about as many barrels as were ever fitted: 18 to be precise. Practical? Probably not. Intimidating? Very much so. What fascinates me is what must have been going through the mind of the customer who first bought it. Did he expect to be ambushed by a gang of thieves or did he see it as the ultimate firearm for defending himself while on military service? The chances are that it



The little pepperbox is an impressive firearm



Loading must have been a lengthy task

was bought for the effect of intimidation, as anyone who had the misfortune to face the wrong end of this beast would probably have had second thoughts about any foul intent.

Trailblazer

Pepperbox revolvers were the first successful multishot firearms developed. Previous attempts had been made using the flintlock ignition method and, going even further back in history, Henry VIII had a revolving matchlock gun. But apart from a couple of exceptions these guns were little more than dangerous novelties. It was the advent of the percussion cap that allowed revolving guns to become practical and most gunmaking countries embraced them.

The revolver shown on these pages was designed and patented by a Belgian called Mariette, though other makers manufactured the majority of his pieces under licence. The main difference between this and most other pepperboxes is that the barrels unscrewed for loading in the same fashion as the common small pocket-pistols of the day.

The muzzles appear to show rifling at the ends. These are cut notches that were designed to take a square-shaped key. While this no doubt speeded up loading, it must still have been a lengthy procedure as each barrel is individually numbered and not interchangeable. The turn-off barrel method allowed the use of a tapering bore, which increased back pressure and velocity considerably, something most other pepperbox designs, especially the English and US types, lacked.

Longevity

The efficiency and effectiveness of Mariette's patent could be the reason pepperbox

revolvers persisted into the early part of the 20th century on the Continent, with percussion giving way to, first, pinfire and later to rimfire and centrefire types.

However, the less-effective solid-barrel types of Britain and America persisted until, in Britain, someone came up with the clever idea of shortening down a pepperbox, adding a single barrel in front of the chamber being fired, and the revolver as we know it was born. These guns are known by collectors as 'transitionals'. They





This multi-shot revolver was made with 18 barrels

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are a peculiarly British idea and relatively short-lived as Mr Colt soon perfected the percussion revolver in the US and other makers quickly followed suit.

Pepperbox revolvers — and, for that matter transitional revolvers — offer a wealth of collecting potential without having to remortgage the house. I know collectors who only collect English types with gunmaker's names on them; American types, especially those by Ethan Allen' and Mariette patent

models. This last can be found with any number of barrels between four and 18 — though as many as 24 are known — with the more barrels being more valuable.

Also, exceptionally large calibre examples as well as extremely small purse types will bring premiums on the collector market, but the standard models can still be purchased at auction for low hundreds, which I feel is little to pay for an important part of firearms history. ■

“Pepperbox revolvers were the first successful multi-shot weapons developed”



You would not want to be on the receiving end of all those barrels



The barrels of this Mariette revolver unscrew for easier loading

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GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Make and model Eball single barrel, hammerless **Choke** Full **Calibre** 12-bore **Barrel** 36in with 3in chamber **Price** £1,000 **CONTACT DETAILS** **Name** Geoff **Tel** 01455 845043 **County** Leics

GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Make and model Lanber **Choke** Multi **Calibre** 12-bore **Barrel** 27½in **Price** £375 **CONTACT DETAILS** **Name** Geoff, as above

GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Make and model Franchi semi-auto **Choke** Multi **Calibre** 20-bore **Barrel** 28in **Price** £400 **CONTACT DETAILS** **Name** Geoff, as above

GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Make and model London Park Sidelock side-by-side, cased. No.2 of pair **Choke** Fixed **Calibre** 12-bore **Barrel** 29in **Price** £3,500 **CONTACT DETAILS** **Name** Bob Hanslip **Tel** 07932 884654 **County** Cambridgeshire

GUN TYPE: AIR RIFLE

Make and model Pre-war BSA air rifle rare 'T' symbol **Choke** Multi **Calibre** .22 **Barrel** 28in **Price:** £300 **CONTACT DETAILS** **Name** Bob Hanslip, as above

GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Make and model Winchester 23 pigeon

grade side by side **Choke** Fixed **Calibre** 12-bore **Barrel** 27in **Price** £450 ono **CONTACT DETAILS** **Name** T Davenport **Tel** 07879072319 **County** Greater Manchester

GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Make and model Fabarm Euro 3 **Choke** Multi (7 chokes) **Calibre** 12-bore **Barrel** 26in **Price** £225 ono **CONTACT DETAILS** **Name** T Davenport, as above

GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Make and model Beretta UGB Exel **Choke** Multi **Calibre** 12 -bore **Price** POA **CONTACT DETAILS** **Name** Steve Harris **Tel** 07881104170 **County** West Sussex

GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Make and model Zoli Sporter **Choke** Multi **Calibre** 12-bore **Barrel** 32in 2 Zoli chokes **Price** £3,700 **CONTACT DETAILS** **Name** Douglas **Tel** 0115 8542138 **County** Nottinghamshire

GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Browning 525 grade 5 30in **Choke** Teague 9 long chokes, cased, lovely condition **Price** £2,600 **CONTACT DETAILS** **Name** Douglas, as above

GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Make and model Huglu over-and-under sideplate with 250 cartridges **Choke** Multi **Calibre** .410 **Barrel**

28in **Price** £300 **CONTACT DETAILS** **Name** J Lindley **Tel** 07568 164041 **County** Beds

GUN TYPE: RIFLE

Make and model CZ .22 RF synthetic stock with Bushnell Scope **Choke** N/A **Calibre**.22 **Barrel** 28in with moderator **Price** £180 **CONTACT DETAILS** **Name** J Lindley, as above

GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Make and model AYA Yeoman side-by-side **Choke** half and full **Calibre**12-bore **Barrel** 28in **Price** £130 **CONTACT DETAILS** **Name** R Cooper **Tel** 07731825893 **County** Lancs

GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Make and model Benelli Montefeltro **Choke** Multi **Calibre** 12-bore **Barrel** 28in **Price** £825 **CONTACT DETAILS** **Name** Dennis **Tel** 07799842686 **County** Kent

GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Make and model Rizzini over-and-under **Choke** Multi **Calibre**12-bore **Barrels** 28in **Price** £300 **CONTACT DETAILS** **Name** Dennis, as above

GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Make and model AYA Yeoman **Choke** Full and ½ **Calibre** 12-bore **Barrel** 28in **Age** 1980 approx **Price** £250 **CONTACT DETAILS** **Name** Steve Want **Tel** 07594 294733 **Email**

stevewant@hotmail.co.uk **County** Oxfordshire

GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Make and model Benelli Montefeltro Comfort semi-auto **Choke** Multi **Calibre** 12-bore **Barrel** 28in **Price** £700 **CONTACT DETAILS** **Name** Phil **Tel** 01924 824993 **County** Yorkshire

GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Make and model Miroku MK 38 Sport **Choke** ¼ and ¾ **Calibre** 12-bore **Barrel** 30in **Price** £650 **CONTACT DETAILS** **Name** B Harris **Tel** 0121 4306534 **County** Midlands

GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Make and model IIsley side-by-side, non-ejector **Calibre** 16-bore **Barrel** 30in game **Price** £220 **CONTACT DETAILS** **Name** J Lacey **Tel** 07504 139455 **County** Northants

GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Make and model Churchill side-by-side **Choke** Fixed **Calibre** 20-bore **Barrel** 28in **Price** £4,000 **CONTACT DETAILS** **Name** Mr Knight **Tel** 01455 446774 **County** Leics

GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Make and model Browning 525 **Choke** Multi **Calibre** 12-bore **Barrel** 30in **Price** £1,050 ono **CONTACT DETAILS** **Name** Ted Hanley **Tel** 01277 634998 **County** Essex

GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Make and model W & C Scott Bowood **Choke** ¼ and ¾ **Calibre** 12-bore **Barrel** 28in **Age** 6 years **Price** £850 **CONTACT DETAILS** **Name** R W Smith **Tel** 07572662238 **County** Kent

GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Make and model Beretta Silver Pigeon **Choke** Multi **Calibre** 20-bore **Barrel** 26½in **Age** New **Price** £800 **CONTACT DETAILS** **Name** Alan Stanmore **Tel** 07786 554863 **County** Essex

GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Make and model Sarriugarte **Calibre** 12-bore **Barrel** 28in **Choke** improved cylinder and ¼ **Price** £100 incl slip, cleaning kit and snap caps **CONTACT DETAILS** **Name** Rob Charlton **Tel** 0191 489 7293/ 07972 501794 **Email** josscharlton@icloud.com **County** Tyne and Wear

GUN TYPE: RIMFIRE RIFLE

Make and model Sako P94S **Barrel** 14½in screw cut heavy **Calibre** .22 rimfire **Price** £800 (incl Burris 3-9x40 scope in steel mounts, leather sling, gun slip, cleaning gear, 4 x 9 shot mags, ammo) **CONTACT DETAILS** Robert Charlton, as before

GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Make and model Caesar Guerini Magnus **Choke** Multi **Calibre** 20-bore **Barrel** 30in **Age** 2 years

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approx Price £1,775

CONTACT DETAILS

Name Phil Cooper

Tel 01608 643002

County Oxfordshire

GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Make and model Miroku ORE Trap Choke Full and full Calibre 12-bore Barrel 30in Age 1970 Price £750

CONTACT DETAILS

Name B Harris

Tel 0121 430 6534

County Midlands

GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Make and model Beretta Sporter 687 Choke Multi Calibre 20-bore Barrel 28in Price £250

CONTACT DETAILS

Name Tom Tel 07837 505977

County Lincs

GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Make and model Beretta AL391 semi-auto Choke Multi Calibre 12-bore Barrel 30in Price £675

CONTACT DETAILS

Name Simon Hazeldine

Tel 07468 002848

County Cumbria

GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Make and model AYA side-by-side Choke cylinder and half Calibre 12-bore Barrel 30in Age 20 years approx Price £350

CONTACT DETAILS

Name J F Dansie Tel 07885 348999

County Essex

GUN TYPE: RIFLE

Make and model Browning semi-auto with moderator Choke N/A Calibre .22 Age 6 years approx Price £425

CONTACT DETAILS

Name Ron Tel 07742 510281

County Herefordshire

GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Make and model Beretta A303 Choke Multi Calibre 12-bore Barrel 30in with original Beretta hard case Price £450 ono

CONTACT DETAILS

Name Edward Howman

Tel 07969 098758

County Norfolk

GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Make and model Hatsan Magnum Escort Calibre 12-bore Choke Multi Barrel 30in, original box

CONTACT DETAILS

Edward Howman, as before

GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Make and model Remington Choke Multi Calibre 10-bore Barrel 30in Age 6 years Price £11,500 ono

CONTACT DETAILS

Name John Graham

Tel 01697 351971

County Cumbria

GUN TYPE: SHOTGUN

Make and model AYA Yeoman Choke ¼, ½ Calibre 12-bore Barrel 28in Age 15 years Price £150

CONTACT DETAILS

Name Malcolm Crannan

Tel 07765 145555

County Tyne and Wear

MISCELLANEOUS

ITEM Musto trousers, 40in waist. As new. Price £60

CONTACT DETAILS

Name Geoff Tel 01455 845043

County Leics

ITEM Beretta Gore-Tex breeks.Size 42in 'as new'.

CONTACT DETAILS

Name Geoff, as above

ITEM Hand-forged Bowie knives for sale by JE Middleton. New and unused condition

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CONTACT DETAILS

Name Bob Harris

Tel 0121 430 6534

County Birmingham

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Price Offers

CONTACT DETAILS

Name Colin Neal Tel 07986 714 991

County Leics

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CONTACT DETAILS

Name Bob Tel 07779 723075

County Shropshire

ITEM Browning and Miroku shotguns, very good condition in 12- or 20-bore.

CONTACT DETAILS

Name Bob Harris

Tel 0121 430 6534

County Birmingham



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Chapter and verse

Are shooting books as popular as they once were?

I DOUBT IT

Robin Scott, former Sporting Gun editor-at-large



Maybe I'm wrong but I suspect relatively few people buy and read shooting books compared with 20 years ago.

Back then new book launches were almost two-a-penny. Today the reverse seems true. Things appear to have hit an all-time low with the printed word.

Back in my teens when the shooting bug really bit, much of my time after school was spent in the local library borrowing and reading anything and everything to do with the sport.

Books by Charles Lancaster, Robert Churchill, Michael Brander, Michael Kemp, Peter Scott and Martyn Moxon were read and re-read. A particular favourite was *Shotgun*

Marksmanship by West London Shooting School coach Percy Stanbury. So too was his follow-up book, *Clay Pigeon Marksmanship*.

Dad and uncles might've got me started in shooting, and their advice proved priceless, but books answered all the questions they couldn't. Information jumped from every page.

So how do newcomers now lay the foundations to their sport? I can't believe that YouTube videos or DVDs come anywhere close to matching the content, depth and detail contained in an expertly written book.

My advice to anyone who's keen to 'fill in the gaps' is to head to their nearest library where they can read to their heart's content, free of charge.

I HOPE SO

Steve Nuttal of Border Fieldsports



I have a room full of shooting and fishing books. In my early days I read everything by 'BB' (Denys Watkins-Pitchford) and Arthur Cadman, recounting forays chasing geese and duck around Scottish firths or East Anglian estuaries.

However, I also like tinkering with guns to see how they're made and collecting them, too. So a big chunk of my library is devoted to the history of British gunmakers.

The line-up includes works by Geoffrey Boothroyd and David Baker, two gun historians with a passion for shotguns. Without them I wouldn't have got started – books were the catalyst for me.

My other passion is ornithology and all things

flora and fauna so, there are a number of useful wildlife reference books. Maybe if the Mr Packhams of this world were to cast an eye over the reading matter of shooters he would soon discover we have a lot more in common than he thinks.

My all-time favourite? That's easy: *Kenzie, the Wild Goose Man*, by Colin Willock.

I had the great pleasure of meeting Kenzie Thorpe on his home turf in Lincolnshire. He was a hugely knowledgeable countryman with an ability to call up all sorts of birds and animals simply by pursing his lips and making the right sounds.

Without that book the world would've never heard of him. And that – if you will excuse the pun – speaks volumes about books.

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