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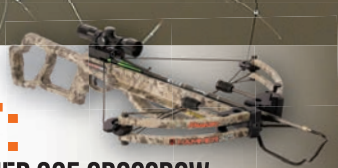
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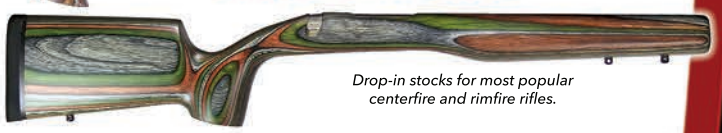


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Photo by George Barnett





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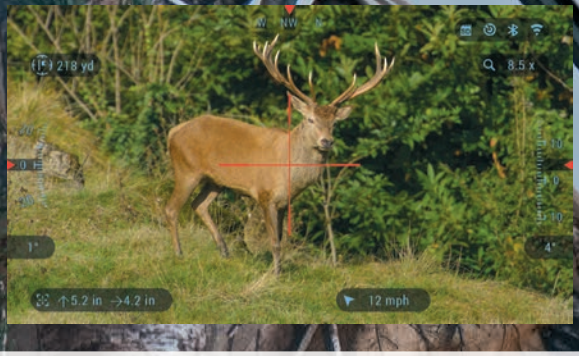
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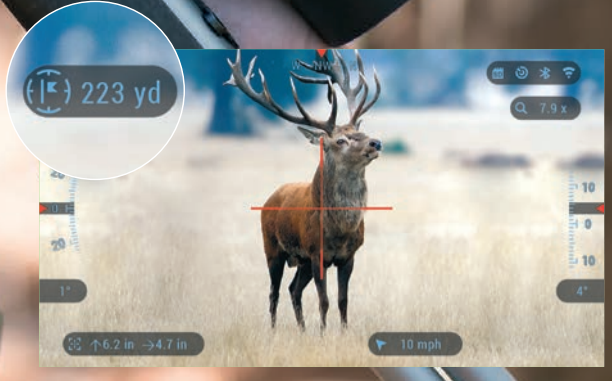
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WEST VIRGINIA GOVERNOR SIGNS SUNDAY HUNTING LAW

West Virginia has removed prohibitions against hunting on Sunday, with Gov. Jim Justice signing a bill into law allowing the state's public lands to be open for Sunday hunting.

"People drive right through West Virginia to Ohio or wherever it may be to be able to hunt on Sunday," Justice said. "We lose those dollars because they want to be able to hunt an entire weekend. This will provide additional hunting recreation for our visitors and residents and result in a major economic impact for our small rural businesses. Today is truly historical."



More than 1.5 million acres of public land will be open now for hunting. The National Shooting Sports Foundation estimates an additional $155 million will be added to West Virginia's economy thanks to the new law.

Hunting on Sunday on private land was approved in the 2017 legislative session. Prior to that, it was legal in some counties due to ballot measure but remained illegal in most of the state on private and public land.

Hunters finally pushed hard enough to end the prohibition of being able to hunt on their own property last year. The addition of the public land includes some million acres of U.S. National Forest land, about 71,000 acres of state forest land and about 380,000 acres of West Virginia wildlife management areas.

Scattered Thoughts

By Tim Davis




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SEVEN INDICTED IN OHIO FOR ALLEGED 11-YEAR POACHING RING

Seven individuals who allegedly participated in a multi-state poaching enterprise suspected of illegally killing whitetailed deer and wild turkey have been indicted, with the alleged crimes dating from 2006-17.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources announced the indictments, which concluded after a multi-year investigation involving multiple state agencies. Among them were the ODNR Division of Wildlife, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (Environmental Enforcement Section), the Ohio Attorney General's Office (Environmental Enforcement Section), West Virginia Natural Resources Police, Pennsylvania Game Commission, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

This investigation spanned across Ohio, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Texas and Washington. One individual, Jason Cue, has pleaded guilty in West Virginia to charges related to the investigation. Those indicted face a wide range of charges that included engaging in a pattern of corrupt activity, hunting without permission, failure to permanently tag turkey or deer, grand theft and others.



Windigo Images/Mark Palas

NORTH GEORGIA WHITETAILS GETTING A HARDER LOOK

Researchers with the University of Georgia Deer Lab are tracking collared deer in north Georgia during a two-year study to determine what's causing their decline.

The study is being conducted on the 20,900-acre Blue Ridge Wildlife Management Area and 30,000-acre Coopers Creek WMA. Both are in the rugged, mountainous Chattahoochee National Forest in extreme north Georgia and comprised almost entirely of hardwoods.

The two-year study will consist of capturing up to 90 adult does using rocket nets and tranquilizer darts. The does will be outfitted with GPS collars and vaginal implant transmitters; the former is for tracking and the latter for location feedback when they drop fawns. Additionally, up to 120 fawns will be captured and outfitted with VHF tracking collars.

Researchers will monitor location of does via GPS, which will transmit every 1-4 hours to determine home ranges and habitat use. They also will investigate fawn mortalities to try to identify the cause of death, and also track survival rates. Infrared trail camera grids will be used to evaluate space-use among deer, predators and wild pigs. The area has seen an increase in the black bear population; feral pigs also have been part of the landscape for years and compete with deer for food.

With the mountains dotted with fields and valleys, the project also will look at deer home ranges and habitat selection. This will include areas of fawning and summer forage, such as young forest growth, possible impacts of predation in these areas, and the influence of mast in areas deer use.

With the uptick in predators, state wildlife officials reduced the doe harvest limits in the area but the whitetail population continued to decline. Among the benefits this project may have are identifying factors limiting deer population growth, targeted habitat management for deer and other wildlife, and recommendations to help improve management.



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by Dr. Dave Samuel



A deer's eyes are situated farther apart than humans or other predators. This makes focusing difficult, but detecting movement easy.

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MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

Deer definitely don't see like we do, but understanding how they see can help keep you from being detected during your next hunt.

There are a ton of reasons that a deer spots you before you see them. For years the debate was all about color vision and the belief that wearing fluorescent orange put hunters at a distinct disadvantage. Truth is, they don't see orange as the orange we see, and we're still at a disadvantage when it comes to deer spotting you.

To get us started, let's look at a few basics on deer color vision. Deer do not see well in the longer and middle wavelengths (oranges, greens, yellows, browns, and reds) in the visible color spectrum. These colors appear in shades of gray or yellow. Where they see very well is in the low wavelengths — the blue range. Does this mean that wearing blue jeans makes me more visible to deer? Yes, that's probably correct.

And since they can see really well in the blue range, using detergents with brighteners puts more blue-range UV colors on our clothes and thus makes it easier to be seen by deer. Is that right?

Though it's a bit more complicated than that, in essence, that is apparently true.

OK, then how does this impact the clothing I should wear when I hunt? First, as noted the blaze orange color we see is not blaze orange for deer. It's probably a shade of gray (unless you wash your clothes using detergents with brighteners). Second, clothes of one color, orange for example, will be a blob of gray to the deer. Big blobs of color are probably easier to see by a deer, than a camo pattern. You don't want big "blobs" of any color. Thus, camo patterns help that problem. Camo patterns of greens, browns, grays, etc. will break up that "blob."

Obviously, relative to deer vision, there are tons of questions, and science has given us some of the answers. To review the above, yes, deer see color, but they have fewer cones in their eyes so they do not see color the same as we do. Yes, they see blues well. Yes, there are products out there that reduce UV glow. Should you use them? That isn't my call, but if there are detergents that do not have UV brighteners in them, and they also reduce scent, why not use them?

Deer have other vision advantages that we do not have. Their low-light vision is enhanced because they can open their pupil three times wider than we can. This allows the eye to admit a lot more light. Add to that the fact that they have lots of rods, which are the receptors needed for low-light conditions. One researcher went so far as to compare our ability to see orange with the deer's ability to see in low light. The conclusion was that in very short wavelengths (in the UV range), where we can't see those UV colors at all, deer can see them, and they can see them better than we

see blaze orange. It's scary how well deer see in low light.

I've watched several hunting shows on television that talked about how you shouldn't bother to hunt during the full moon because the deer could see at night and thus, fed all night and were inactive during the day. Think about this for a minute. Deer do a lot of moving around at night, so through evolution they have eyes that function at night. If they couldn't see well at night, when there is no moon, they'd bed all night and feed all day. But that isn't the case.

It also isn't the case that when the moon is totally dark, deer are out there stumbling around, walking into trees. Why not? Because their eyes have a number of adaptations that allow them to see extremely well in low light. Maybe the moon affects deer movements and the rut, maybe not? But deer do not need moonlight to see at night.

Some other things about deer vision. The eyes of deer are not as close together as ours so their depth perception is not good. They can spot a hunter moving, but may not readily know how far away you are. Compare that to humans or predators. Our eyes, and the eyes of predators, are close together giving better binocular vision. Really important for predators out their searching for a meal.

Though having eyes further apart reduces depth perception, it does have an advantage for deer. Having eyes further apart gives deer the ability to cover a lot of ground with their eyes. The added rods also give deer an extraordinary ability to detect movement. What hunters need to take away from all this is that movement is what does us in. So, don't make unnecessary movements on stand. If you have to move, do so very slowly. And wear gloves.

This whole movement issue centers around visual acuity. Turns out that humans have sharp central vision, good visual acuity, whereas deer do not. When you focus on one spot, as you are right now in reading this, going from one word to the next, things in the periphery are not clear. They are blurred. When you focus on one spot, the further away from that spot, the blurrier it gets. Try it. Being able to see that word clearly is called visual acuity. In fact, when you go to the eye doctor and look at those "AE@" charts, your visual acuity is being tested.

What about a deer's visual acuity? University of Georgia research showed that deer have 80 percent less acuity than we do. The reason ours is good is because we have an optic fovea that is located in the center of the retina and it is packed with many, many cones. That means that when we focus on one spot, we can see it clearly. On the other hand, deer have a band of photo receptors across the retina, rather than one central spot. This allows a deer to scan a wide field of view all at once, without moving their eyes, but they do not have as many cones in this narrow band as we do. Thus, the acuity to focus on one spot is not great. If you have a deer standing at 80 yards facing in your direction, looking at you, they will have difficulty seeing you if you do not move. But, if they are not looking directly at you, because they have those photo receptors all across the eye, they can see you. However, not clearly. Move, and your busted. Even when they aren't looking directly at you.

Since deer have poor visual acuity, slow movements are harder for them to detect, and of course, wearing camo helps. OK, not totally. Movement even when wearing camo, will get the attention of deer. We all know that. If you flip up your arm, even in camo, you enhance the chance of being seen by a deer, even one that is not looking directly at you. Truth is, that it's movement that does the hunter in, and it is camo that allows you to move and sometimes get away with it.

Consider this question. Do you think a deer has a better chance of seeing you move your hands if you are wearing camo gloves or if you are not wearing gloves? The defense rests its case.

The key then, relative to deer vision, isn't so much color, but rather their ability to see really well in low light, and their ability to detect movement. If on stand you flip your arm up, even in camo, you enhance the chance of being seen by a deer, even one that is not looking directly at you. Combine that with their ability to see better at dawn and dusk, and you start to understand that when it comes to a deer's vision, there's more than meets the eye.

> "The key then, relative to deer vision, isn't so much color, but rather their ability to see really well in low light and their ability to detect movement."



A deer's vision allows them to detect movement well, but their poor visual acuity makes it hard for them to detect a camo-clad hunter sitting still.

by Stephen D. Carpenteri

PARKER HAMMER 325

Affordable, easy to set up, lightweight and accurate.



As always, the bottom line in selecting a crossbow for deer hunting is light weight, accuracy and reliability. Long before a crossbow hunter hits the field, however, there are the matters of assembly and function to contend with. When it comes to these basic considerations, Parker's "new for 2018" Hammer 325 leads the pack. Assembly is quick and easy (only five screws required to attach the limbs and quiver mount), plus the entire owner's manual is relevant to the Hammer 325. Most other manufacturers' manuals include a mishmash of models, styles and instructions that, in some cases, never even refer to the model shipped in the box. I applaud Parker for taking the time to make all of its instructions and accompanying paperwork apply to the Hammer 325, making the assembly, shooting and maintenance phases that much easier to comprehend.

In addition, Parker has set up a Web site (*www.parkerbows.com/videos*) where purchasers can access a variety of free videos that cover assembly, shooting, arrow choice, crossbow safety, trouble-shooting and many other crossbow-related issues. By the time a purchaser has assembled his crossbow and studied the accompanying literature, he's ready to head for the woods with full confidence in his new acquisition.

Armed with the necessary screwdrivers and wrenches I was able to assemble the crossbow, quiver mount and quiver in just over 1 minute flat — it was that easy. The one-page assembly sheet is well-illustrated, clear and concise, and all screws and parts required were as described in the text. I suspect that the average 10-year-old could easily assemble the Hammer 325 with ease.

The Hammer 325 basic package includes the crossbow, quiver and choice of factory-mounted scopes (multi-reticle, 3x illuminated, 3x Pin Point or Variable IR) along with four "Capture Nock" 300-grain arrows and field tips. MSRP is $549.95. Parker's complete catalog of crossbows and accessories may be viewed at *www.parkerbows.com*.

My sample Hammer 325 came equipped with a 3x illuminated multi-reticle scope, which is exactly what I would have chosen for the kind of crossbow hunting I normally do — shooting from stands or blinds at short range in typically thick whitetail cover.

The scope has four range settings that are pre-set in 10-yard increments. Simply sight in at 10 yards with the top reticle simply to be sure you are on target, and then back off to 20 yards and reshoot for zero. Thus sighted in, the crossbow is good for shots at whitetails at 20, 30, 40 and 50 yards with no additional adjustments necessary.

For the sake of accuracy and peace of mind I shoot my crossbows at all four distances and make minor adjustments as needed. Accuracy is likely to and will drop off at 40 and 50 yards, but in no instance was my Hammer 325 off more than two inches, which is more than acceptable for deer hunting.

By the way, I don't recommend shooting at deer beyond 40 yards with a crossbow simply because cover, wind, visibility and unexpected movement can affect accuracy and game can be lost. However, in open-field situations where there are no obstacles or wind, taking such a shot may be justified. I prefer to wait till my targets move a few yards closer, which they invariably do.

For testing purposes I used the provided arrows, which Parker recommends "to prevent damage to the crossbow and to protect your warranty." I had no trouble shooting arrows of similar weight (300 to 400 grains) with other types of nocks but for warranty purposes it's always best to honor the manufacturer's recommendations. In any case the Hammer 325 performed well. There were no problems with function or accuracy regardless of the type of nocks used.

As part of my range review I get into a blind and climb into a tree stand to test the crossbow in real-world hunting situations. The Hammer 325 was easy to cock and load while sitting (in the blind) or standing, and I was even able to comfortably load the crossbow while sitting in a climbing tree stand, which is no easy task. Of course, I would recommend that hunters practice loading and cocking their new Hammer 325 before a hunt, preferably in low-light conditions to emulate early-morning and late-afternoon situations. Pull back hard and listen for that satisfying "CLICK!" which indicates a cleanly-cocked crossbow.

By the way, Parker recommends that all of its crossbows be unloaded or de-cocked at the end of the day by firing an old but serviceable arrow into a hay bale, soft dirt or spongy turf. Parker does not recommend that its crossbows be left cocked when not in use or (tellingly) unsupervised. Crossbows are not toys and should not be treated as such.

At just over 36 inches the Hammer 325 is short enough to allow 360-degree shooting in a blind and, with its 20-inch axle-to-axle width gives tree stand hunters plenty of room for error when perched 20 feet or more off the ground. At that height it's usually no problem to allow a big buck to walk around the tree or into a pre-established shooting lane where typical obstructions (limbs or the tree trunk) end up behind the shooter.

At 7 pounds the Hammer 325 is well-balanced and comfortable enough to carry in the still-hunting position. As I "stalked" my targets on the roving range I had no problem bringing the crossbow smoothly into the shooting position.

The ambidextrous safety is comfortably located at the rear of the receiver and flips to "Fire" with a barely-audible click. During the test I made it a point to cock, load and fire the Hammer 325 two or three times on random targets and had no malfunctions, mishaps or misses as a result.



It is generally rare to fire more than two shots during actual hunting conditions but I have hunted in a few states where multiple deer may be taken. On one hunt I was able to down a buck and two does out of the same herd with successive shots – certainly unusual but doable. In my efforts to duplicate that scenario on the range with Hammer 325 came

PARKER'S 3X MULTI-RETICLE ILLUMINATED SCOPE

One of the most useful accessory items for any crossbow enthusiast is an illuminated scope that is specifically designed for crossbow use. Options range from non-illuminated, no-power, single-reticle models to a wide variety of multi-reticle illuminated scopes including fixed-power and variable-power models.

Parker's 3X Multi-Reticle Illuminated Scope is the ideal choice for the new Hammer 325. The scope is short, compact, lightweight and barely noticeable on its elevated mount.

Inside, the scope offers four circular, vertical reticles set in 10-yard increments so the crossbow may be sighted in at 10 or 20 yards. Outside are the usual elevation and windage adjustments, flip-up lens covers and a red-green illumination knob with six degrees of brightness that include all four circles. It's generally recommended that only the lowest setting be use because the brighter settings can obscure a potential target, especially in near-dark conditions.

For test purposes I ran the roving range one-half hour after sunset using the lowest (green) setting and had 100-percent hits on all targets. For some reason I did not do as well with the red setting, but experience suggests that this is a personal choice — some hunters are deadly using red illumination while others prefer green.

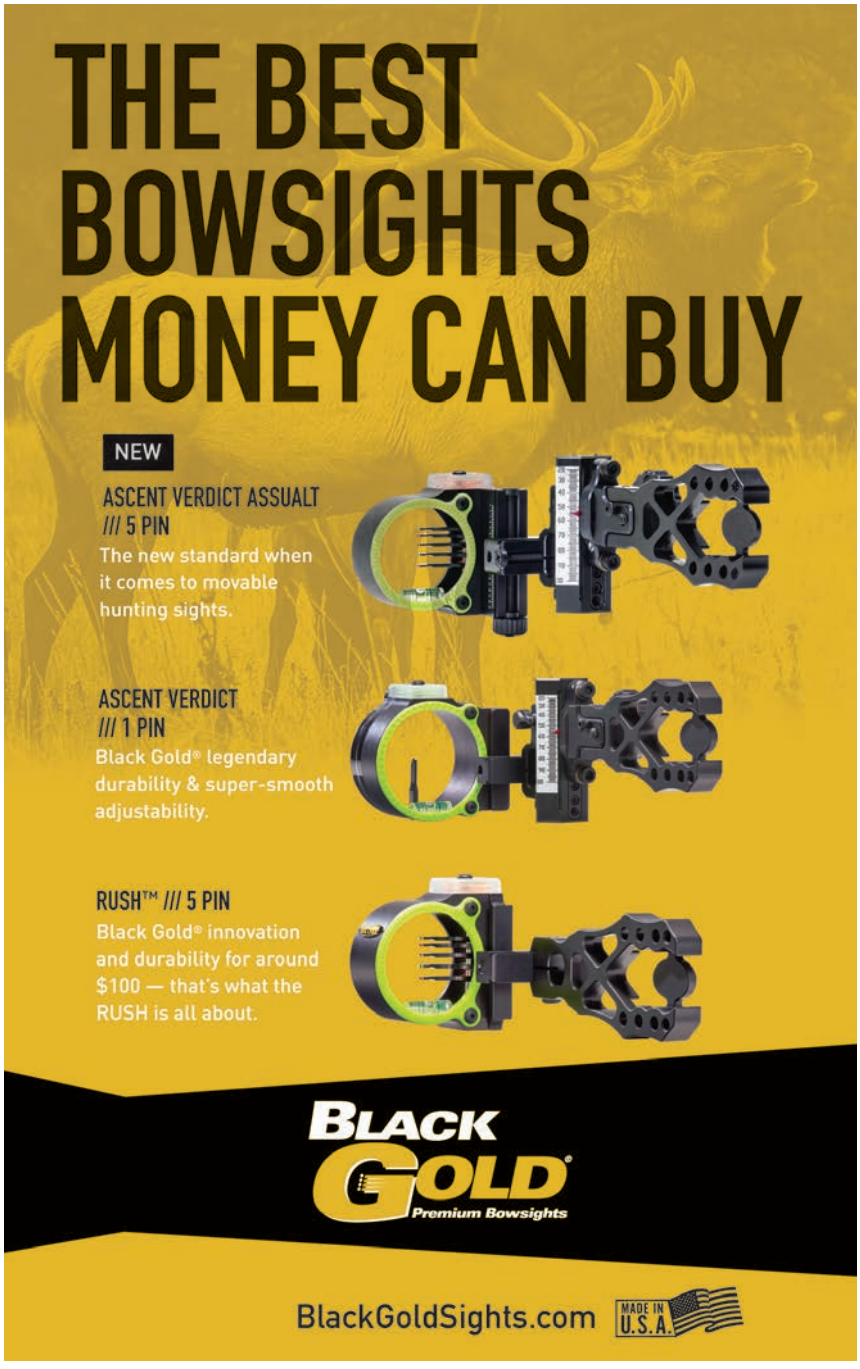
In checking my records over the last 10 years of crossbow hunting I found that 90 percent of my biggest bucks were taken before sunrise or after sunset. In all cases green illumination was the key element for my success. In fact, some of those deer were taken using early-model Parker crossbows with illuminated scopes, so I have a history of good luck using Parker products.

For more information on Parker crossbows, scopes and accessories, log onto *www.parkerbows.com*.

by Stephen D. Carpenteri

through with flying colors. Each arrow was on target with every shot, which for me is a requirement for any crossbow I take into the whitetail woods. If there's a problem with a test crossbow's mechanics or sight system I make every effort to resolve the issues before heading afield.

In discussions about arrow speed one could make the case that the Hammer 325's fps rating is neither phenomenal nor ground-breaking, especially considering that many modern crossbow manufacturers have already surpassed the 400 fps threshold. However, after more than two decades of deer, bear and hog hunting with crossbows I can attest that none of these large, heavy animals will jump the string or outrun an arrow traveling even at a relatively sluggish 325 fps.



I ran the Hammer 325 through the chronograph test and found that with the arrows provided by Parker on a freshly-waxed rail I was getting slightly higher readings, all the way up to 330 fps, which, again, is faster than any trophy-class whitetail's reflexes at 20, 30 or even 40 yards.

My only complaint about the Hammer 325 is that no sling or cocking rope is included in the basic crossbow package. Parker does offer its Red Hot cocking rope as an accessory, which will naturally increase the basic cost of the unit. I believe that one must have a sling in order to transport a crossbow and one must also have a cocking rope in order to shoot it, so it makes sense to me that both items should be included in the basic crossbow package. This has not yet become the industry standard but I, for one, hope it soon will be.

In the final analysis the Parker Hammer 325 is an excellent entry-level crossbow that is easy to assemble and shoots accurately and consistently out to 40 yards. It is sturdy, nicely balanced and suitably compact for use in blinds, climbing stands or ladder stands.

I will definitely make room for it on my next whitetail hunt.

SPECS

Manufacturer: Parker Crossbows
Model: Hammer 325
Draw weight: 170 pounds
Power stroke: 11¼ inches
Arrow length: 20 inches
Trigger pull: 3½ pounds with anti-dry-fire device
Sights: Various scope packages offered
Cocking device: Rope cocker
Overall length: 36¾ inches
Axle-to-axle length: 20¼ inches
Weight: 7 pounds
Other features: String suppressers standard; Kryptek Highlander tan camo finish.
MSRP: $549.99
For more information: ***www.parkerbows.com***

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by David Hart



Providing quality forage high in protein is an important piece of your deer-management strategy. Here's the rundown on how to ensure you grow successful summer plots.

SUMMER NUTRITION PLOTS

Feed your deer high-quality foods all summer.

Warm-season plots may not put deer under our stands during hunting season like a field of turnips or clover can, but they do have a valid purpose. Summer nutrition plots can give whitetails abundant protein during the antler-growing and fawning season and they can provide high-quality forage on otherwise marginal land.

What To Plant?

So what's right for you? The good news is that virtually every commercially-available summer plot product has adequate nutrition. Even better, deer will eat them all. Some have higher levels of protein than others, of course. Lablab, for instance, has crude protein as high as 30 percent. Iron clay cowpeas and soybeans also have high levels of protein.

"Native forage may have lower protein levels, so it can be beneficial to provide plants with higher levels of protein. Basically, the higher protein plants will average out the plants with lower protein," says Mississippi State University wildlife professor Dr. Steve Demarais.

Whether they have 16 percent or 30 percent crude protein, it's usually a good idea to plant two or three different plants in a single food plot. Combining two types of plants can give your deer more tonnage per acre and it will provide them with more choices. Remember, deer don't live on a single plant alone. Give them more choices and they are more likely to stay on or near your property.

"It's not a bad idea to plant something like corn, sunflowers or grain sorghum and a climbing plant like peas or vining beans," says Purdue University extension wildlife specialist Brian MacGowan. "The upright plants will serve as structure for the climbing plants so they are up off the ground and more available to deer."

What's more important, agree Demarais and MacGowan, is matching plants to soil types. Some plants just perform better than others in certain soil types. Although you can amend the pH level and nutrient level with lime and fertilizer, you can't alter a soil's ability to hold moisture or drain. Sandy soil, for instance, won't hold moisture as well as heavier, clay-based soil. Sunflowers are fairly drought-tolerant. So are iron clay cowpeas and some varieties of soybeans.

"It can actually be better to buy seeds from your local farm supply store instead of buying generic seeds marketed for food plots because your farm supply store will have varieties suited for your region," says MacGowan.

Demarais agrees. Not only do certain plants do better than others in different soil types, specific varieties can outperform others. A variety of beans, for instance, have been engineered in recent years for dry conditions.

"Ask local farmers which crops grow best in your local soil types.



Always pull soil samples from each plot and follow the recommendations. It's a small price to pay to ensure that you will produce the most high-protein tonnage available to your deer herd.

You may still need to amend the soil to get the proper pH and nutrients for your plants, which means you should get a soil test and follow the recommendations," he adds. "Plants that have the proper pH and nutrients will be more attractive to deer and will provide better nutrition."

Go Big

What you plant is important, but so is how much you plant. Small plots, anything less than an acre, may be fine in areas with extremely low deer densities. However, if you have lots of deer, you'll need a pretty large food plot. That's because deer don't wait for plants to reach their maximum growth. And whitetails eat a lot in the summer. A 150-pound deer eats up to 10 pounds of forage per day.

In many cases, they will start nibbling on food plots soon after the plants break through the ground. Many summer nutrition plot plants, soybeans and sunflowers, for instance, won't continue to grow if they've been topped off. That's why MacGowan recommends at least two acres in areas with higher deer numbers. Five acres is even better.

"A good rule of thumb is that at least two or three percent of the habitat should be in food plots if you want to have an impact," says Demarais. "Ideally, you want even more than that if your habitat is marginal to begin with."

If you don't have much space or you have lots of deer, consider plants that produce more tonnage—the total amount of plant matter. Soybeans are a good choice. So are most warm-season pea varieties. Lablab also produces lots of forage. Climbing plants combined with an upright plant, peas and sunflowers or climbing beans and sorghum, for example, will produce lots of food in smaller spaces. However, you still might need to build an exclusion fence to prevent deer from devouring your plots too soon.

Weed Management

No matter what you plant, you will have to deal with weeds. Every native plant on the landscape is attempting to produce their own seeds. That means the seed bank in your soil will sprout and grow within your summer plots. And that means you will need to control those unwanted plants. Remember, though, many of those plants we call weeds are the same ones deer have been eating long before anyone every thought about planting a food plot.

"Lots of native plants have very high protein levels and are excellent deer forage," says MacGowan.

On the other hand, many aren't. Grasses in particular can be troublesome. Johnson grass, orchard grass, foxtail millet and others can overtake a summer plot and rob the good plants of sunlight, moisture and nutrients. Lots of broadleafs can harm a food plot, too.

A variety of herbicides can help control those unwanted plants. Selective herbicides like sethoxydim and clethodim kill grasses, but they won't harm most broadleaf plants. Just remember that sorghum and corn are both grasses and may be killed if sprayed with a grass-specific herbicide.

Roundup Ready soybeans can be a good choice on sites with lots of troublesome weeds. They provide abundant high-quality forage and they withstand a shot of herbicide that will kill other plants.





Top Photo: This plot of Whitetail Institute Power-Plant blend is infested with grass weeds.
Bottom Photo: This is the same plot six weeks later after spraying with Arrest Max herbicide to kill grass weeds.

by David Hart



Deer prefer a buffet of food. This blend from Adams-Briscoe Seed Company contains soybeans, lablab, sunflower, iron-clay cowpeas and sunn hemp.

Do They Help?

Even if you manage to knock back the weeds, it is important to have realistic expectations. If you plant summer plots with the goal of creating a herd brimming with heavy-antlered bucks, you might be disappointed.

It is true that a diet of high-quality food can produce noticeably larger antlers, but that is most obvious in a controlled environment. Deer in fenced enclosures only eat what is put in front of them. Free-range deer are entirely different.

"They don't just stand in the middle of a food plot and eat all day like a cow. They eat hundreds of different types of plants throughout the year and they typically eat a wide variety of plants in a single day," says MacGowan. "Food plots make up only a fraction of their daily diet."

That's why Demarais says you should also improve the rest of the habitat to provide as much native food as possible. Summer food plots only last so long.

"A food plot will make a difference to the deer, but those differences may not be visible to you," says Demarais. "If larger antlers are your primary goal, you should also incorporate other management activities."

Of the three factors that influence antler size (nutrition, genetics and age), the simplest one to control is age. By passing up young bucks, you automatically increase antler size. Four-year-old bucks typically have larger antlers than two-year-olds. And remember, every management activity takes time. Planting a summer plot probably won't result in noticeably larger antlers that fall. In order to have an impact on the health of your deer herd, it can take several years of providing high-quality food along with suitable habitat. In other words, if you are going to plant summer nutrition plots, plan on adding them to your yearly management plan for the rest of your deer-hunting life.



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by Jace Bauserman

BOWHUNTING ON A BUDGET: GET A NEW BOW SETUP FOR UNDER $1,000

From a new bow to all the necessary accessories, bowhunting on a budget is very doable. Here's how to get out there without breaking the bank.

"It's done," said my good buddy in a recent phone conversation. He was calling to inform me that the limbs on his 1980 compound bow model finally gave out — he'd found a large crack on the bottom limb.

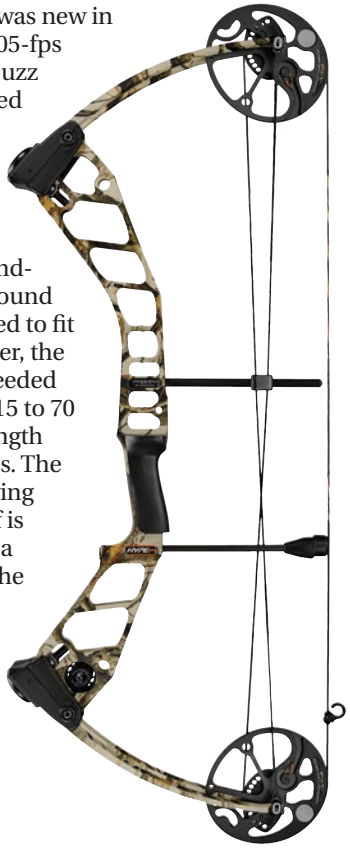
"I was all dialed-in for spring birds, but now I don't know what to do," he went on. "I just can't afford a new bow right now, let alone some accessory items to put on it. I could use my old sight and rest, but they aren't in the best shape either, and after the bow break, it's got me nervous. I've been needing to upgrade for some time now, but every time I scrape some change together, something comes up with the family. I've got $1,000 to spend right now. Can you help me?"

Sound at all familiar? Here's the good news: it's possible to put together a hunting setup for less than $1,000 — and that includes a sight, rest, stabilizer, quiver, arrows and broadheads. Check it out.

Three Budget Rigs

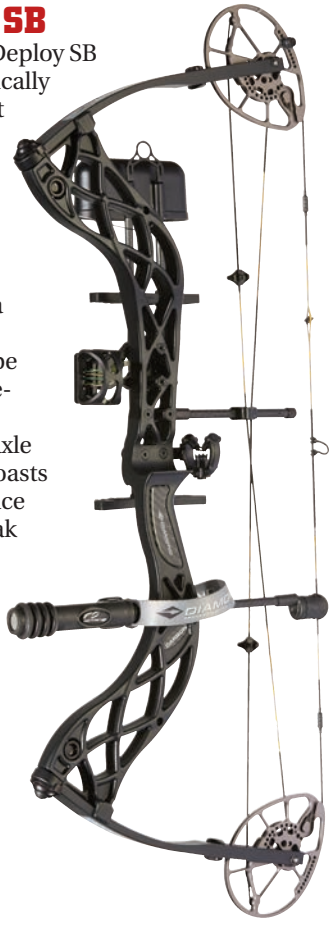
First you'll need a quality bow. And while some premium flagship bows can easily cost over $1,000 for a bare bow, there are several quality bows that still leave plenty of room in the budget for good accessories.

Mission Hype DTX



The Hype DTX ($400) was new in 2017, and this up-to-305-fps bow is still creating a buzz with the budget-minded bowhunting crowd. Measuring 31 inches axle to axle and tipping the scales at just 4.16 pounds, this bow is ideal for spot-and-stalk, treestand and ground blind hunting. Designed to fit almost every bowhunter, the DTX has a no-press-needed draw-weight range of 15 to 70 pounds and a draw-length range of 19 to 30 inches. The brace height is a forgiving 7 inches, and the letoff is 80 percent. The grip is a composite-style, and the bow features Mission's perimeter-weighted F.I.T. Cam System. Other notable features are the Dead End String Stop and Mathews Harmonic Stabilizer.

Diamond Deploy SB



Diamond describes its Deploy SB ($649) as its most technically advanced bow. It doesn't take long to see why. The bow is powered by Bowtech's proven Binary Cam System and hits speeds up to 330 fps. Weighing only 3.2 pounds, this bow is a dream to tote. The rig's feather-like nature can be credited to its aerospace-inspired carbon riser. Measuring 31½ inches axle to axle, the Deploy SB boasts a generous 6 ¾-inch brace height and comes in peak draw weights of 50, 60 and 70 pounds. Effective letoff is 80 percent, and the bow fits draw lengths between 26 and 30 ½ inches.

Photo by John Hafner

PSE Ramped



Built on an all-new riser and short-limb design, PSE's Ramped ($400) promises a great feel and an ultra-adjustable Drive-style cam. Weighing just 3 ½ pounds and measuring 30 ¾ inches between the axles, this rig hits speeds up to 318 fps. A generous draw-length range of 24 to 30 inches and peak draw weights of 60 and 70 pounds with up to 12 limb-bolt turns to reduce weight make this rig even more attractive to the budget bowhunter. The bow offers a 6 ½-inch brace height and has an effective letoff rating of 80 percent.

Price-Friendly Accessories

All three of these budget bows come as packages (for an additional cost). But if you've chosen to purchase a bare bow, you'll need to purchase a few other items to be ready for the field. Here are some quality accessory items that won't break the bank:

TRUGLO TSX Pro Series Standard

The TSX Pro Series sight ($63) offers the features bowhunters loved in the Tru-Site Xtreme and adds Tru-Touch Soft-Feel coating and rugged stainless-steel pins. This three-pin sight (a five-pin model is also available) boasts a large circular field of view and ultra-tough — but still lightweight — construction. The TSX Pro Series features an adjustable second- and third-axis level with two vertical bars and an adjustable rheostat light to reduce unwanted pin glare.



MOMENT OF TRUTH

by Jace Bauserman

QAD UltraRest Hunter

QAD is known for its quality, and when it comes to the piece of equipment that holds your arrow, quality is a must. Enter the UltraRest Hunter ($65). This fall-away arrow rest guarantees total arrow containment via the capture bar, has an easy-to-use thumbwheel, and boasts horizontal and overdraw adjustments. The rest is made from precision CNC aluminum, stainless steel and delrin components.



Trophy Ridge Static 6

I've always been a fan of Trophy Ridge stabilizers, and the Static 6 ($35) is one of my favorites. This airy stabilizer is lightweight, and its design allows wind to pass easily through, making you steadier in gusty conditions. The Ballistix CoPolymer System is 25 percent lighter than aluminum but offers the same strength. The stabilizer comes with a pair of 1-ounce weights.



Beman ICS Bow Hunter Fletched Arrows

With a straightness rating of +/- .006, the ICS Bow Hunter ($36/6-pack) has been a bowhunter favorite for years. Built on the concept of durability, the ICS Bow Hunter comes fletched with 2-inch XPV vanes, Direct-Fit S nocks and CB inserts. Spine sizes of 340 (9.3 gpi), 400 (8.4 gpi) and 500 (7.3 gpi) are available to meet a wide range of draw weights.



TruFire Smoke Extreme

A new-for-2018 spin on TruFire's popular Smoke, the Smoke Extreme ($40) is a reliable dual-caliper release that offers locking length adjustment as well as adjustable trigger travel. The Extreme Style wrist strap promises comfort.





Bohning Bruin

A four-arrow quiver with a molded hood and liner for quiet storage of fixed- and mechanical broadheads alike, the Bohning Bruin ($33) boasts a high-impact polycarbonate stem to provide the strength of metal without the added weight. The quiver is equipped with a built-in hook for quick hanging and Bohning's legendary Lever-Lock mounting system. A number of custom-color hood liners are available.

G5 Montec

Sold in packs of three, the G5 Montec ($42) is a proven in-the-field fixed-blade head you can depend on. Featuring one-piece MIM construction, the Montec doesn't need to have blades inserted, and the 100-percent steel engineering ensures rugged durability. A three-blade design with a 1⅛-inch cut diameter, the Montec has been the demise of countless game animals since its introduction.



Your Cost

Below is a breakdown of your total cost of the three different budget bows outfitted with the above-mentioned accessory items:

Mission Hype DTX: $714

Diamond Deploy SB: $963

PSE Ramped: $714

There you have it. Whether you're looking to replace a worn-out bow package or simply wanting to get into the bowhunting woods for less than $1K, the above products are worth a look.

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by Scott Mayer



Accuracy was excellent with both match and hunting ammunition.

STEYR CLII SX

Steyr updates the looks of its Pro Hunter with a classic-style stock while retaining all of the accuracy for which it was known.

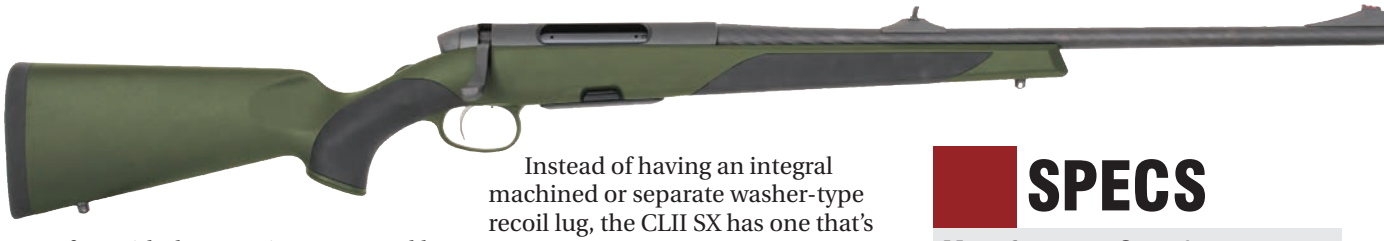
After a 20-year run, Steyr is phasing out its Pro Hunter rifle and replacing it with the CLII SX. "[T]he Pro Hunter is an older line of rifles and needed to be upgraded," explains Steyr's National Sales Manager, Eric Wood, of the decision. "There is nothing wrong with the Pro Hunter," he adds, "[it] just needs a face lift." I agree, and that's really what the CLII SX is — a Pro Hunter with a facelift, making it the kind of hunting rifle I feel it always promised to be.

I've always liked the Pro Hunter's action, but was never a big fan of the stock. Its "layered" spacers clearly provide the ability to easily change the length of pull and, from a functional standpoint the horizontal stock toe makes sense, but aesthetically neither really appealed to me. Many hunters also reported that the forend seemed a little flimsy, especially when shooting off of sticks or a bipod, and that the absence of checkering or any significant texturing made it "slick" to hold, particularly with gloves on.

The CLII SX dispenses with the Pro Hunter's futuristic-looking adjustable stock in favor of a more classic fixed synthetic one with a 14-inch length of pull, rubberized panels in the gripping areas, a slight palm swell for right-hand shooting and a generous integral trigger guard. It sports an internal aluminum bedding system for increased accuracy and rigidity and, perhaps in deference to grievances about the Pro Hunter's forend, Steyr's Austrian website notes the CLII SX is "optimized for use with bipod."

Aside from the stock, the CLII SX is pretty much the same as the Pro Hunter with satisfied owners posting favorable comments about the CLII such as, "You'd have a hard time building a custom Remington to this level for this kind of money."

The action is Steyr's Safe Bolt System (SBS) that has a trigger-locking



safety with three settings operated by a wheel switch on the tang. With it, you can put the rifle on "fire," "safe" with the bolt unlocked for chambering/unchambering a round, or "safe" with the bolt locked. There are also a couple of additional clever design features built into the safety. One is that if you lift the bolt handle before putting the safety in the locked bolt position, it frees the bolt for removal from the rear of the action. Pretty slick. The other is that in the locked bolt position, you can press the bolt handle an additional half inch toward the stock to lock both the trigger and firing pin.

Instead of having an integral machined or separate washer-type recoil lug, the CLII SX has one that's a separate piece that's bolted onto the bottom front of the action. From a production standpoint, this makes sense as it reduces the amount of more expensive detailed machining required on the action body itself. It interfaces precisely with the aluminum bedding system.

The two-piece bolt has a full diameter body with recessed head. Both locking lugs are full diameter and bifurcated effectively creating four locking surfaces and, as Woods points out it's, "a lot smoother than most rifles on the market in its class making it easier to get a second shot off if needed."



One of the features of the detachable four-round polymer magazine is the ability to lower it about ⅛ inch and lock it in place for single loading.



Steyr's SBS action is a lot smoother than many rifles on the market in its class, making it easier to get a second shot off if needed.

SPECS

Manufacturer: Steyr Arms
Model: CLII SX
Calibers: .308 Win., .30-'06 Sprg., .300 Win. Mag.
Action: Bolt-action repeating rifle
Magazine capacity: 4
Barrel: Hammer-forged, Mannox finish, 23½ inches (25½ inches in .300 Win. Mag.)
Trigger: Two-stage, adjustable, 4¼ pound pull
Sights: Windage-adjustable blade rear, elevation-adjustable post front
Stock: Green synthetic with black rubberized grip inserts
Overall length: 43 inches
Weight: 7½ pounds
MSRP: $1,730
More Information: ***www.steyrarms.com***

Though the action is a "solid top" to add rigidity, the generous ejection port is large enough for easy single-loading. To help facilitate that, one of the more unique features of the four-round polymer magazine is that it has twin engagements hooks that let you drop it about 1/8-inch without removing it from the gun. In that position, the bolt passes over the cartridges in the magazine instead of picking them up, eliminating the risk of double feeding when single loading. You have to actually have cartridges in the magazine to single load this way or the loose cartridge sits too low for the bolt face to pick it up, so if the magazine is empty, seat it fully to single load. To re-seat the magazine, just slap it fully home.

A distinguishing feature of Steyr rifles is the spiral pattern left on the barrels from the hammer forging operation. Other manufacturers polish it off, but it looks cool, so Steyr leaves it on. I was a little surprised to see that the CLII SX comes with iron sights since they're nearly relegated to a thing of the past, but it does. The front is a square post with bright metal face that's adjustable for

by Scott Mayer



A three-position roller safety also acts as the bolt removal.



The two-stage trigger is adjustable by an authorized Steyr armorer.



The bolt lugs are bifurcated, creating four locking surfaces. A hook extractor and plunger ejector are robust and reliable.

elevation. The rear is a plain black blade that slopes forward as is the fashion on many European rifles and is drift-adjustable for windage. They're bomb-proof.

The trigger is an integral part of the entire SBS system, so don't look for aftermarket replacements. Many Steyr owners are familiar with Steyr's "set" trigger feature where you can set the pull to a hair trigger by pressing the trigger blade forward. You won't find that standard on the CLII SX. Instead, it's a two-stage direct pull trigger that on the sample came set at 4¼ pounds. It had a great break and very little overtravel and despite having what I consider a little too much weight, was easy to use. It is adjustable, though the adjustment screws in the trigger blade are sealed at the factory and Steyr recommends that only authorized Steyr armorers make trigger adjustments.

To see how well the .308 Win.-chambered CLII performed, I fitted it with a Leica Magnus 1.5-10x42mm scope and fired it with Winchester's 150-grain Deer Season XP and Nexus' 175-grain HPBT Match loads at 100 yards. Accuracy was absolutely great with both loads. The Match ammunition provided an average group size of 0.98-inch for five consecutive three-shot groups while the hunting loads shot almost equally well, averaging 1.08 inches and delivering the tightest group — 0.54 inch.

I make it a habit of cleaning the bore between ammunition types to give each load an even starting point for accuracy. With a clean, cold bore, the CLII consistently drilled it on the first shot, but delivered its tightest groups only after the bore was fouled by a half dozen or so shots. This is one of those rifles where, once sighted in with my chosen load, I wouldn't bother cleaning the bore until accuracy started to go bad — and that could be several hundred shots.

I've read European writers describe the CLII as having a "dead feel" when shooting it. That's an important consideration in Europe where a lot of hunting is done by driving game and shooting it on the move at close range and a lively gun is an advantage. For American deer hunters, it's quite the opposite; this is a gun you



The squared forend doesn't aid in off-hand shooting as much but works great from a shooting house or treestand.

can hold steady while aiming at a standing buck across a field and that "dead feel" almost forces you to follow through properly for more accurate shooting.

That "deadness" also helped with follow-up shots. When rapidly reloading a bolt-action, I usually find it easiest to cup my hand and sweep the bolt handle up and back, then roll my palm over and push it forward and down. Because the CLII has Steyr's charismatic spoon bolt handle, it's easier to work the bolt by grasping the handle between your thumb and forefinger and maintaining control during its entire travel.

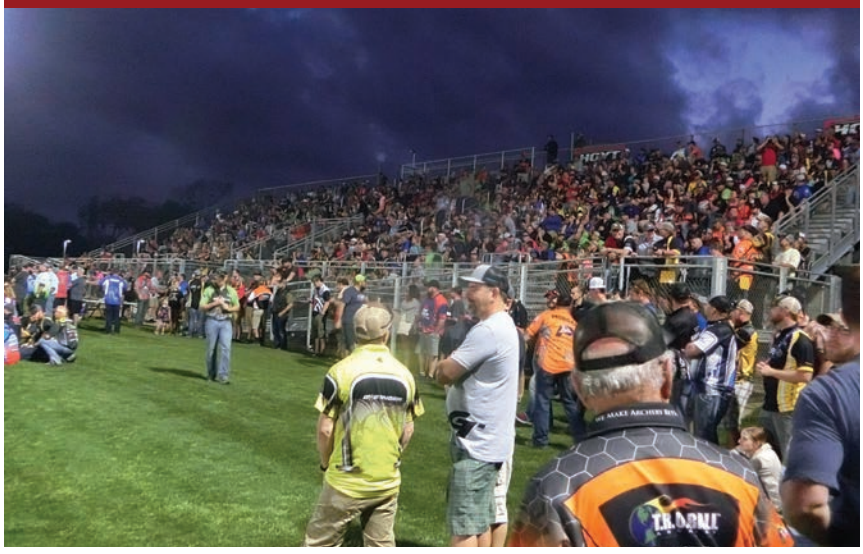
Offhand and from various field positions, this is a very steady rifle to shoot. The squarish forend doesn't fit the hand as well as a rounded one, but will be steadier when shooting from a deer stand or shoot house that has a rifle rest.

Overall, this is a very sturdy rifle made for no-fuss hunting no matter what condition or environment is thrown at it. Wood calls the ideal customer for the CLII SX someone who "knows he can rely on a firearm that can handle the best or worst weather conditions and still have the same accuracy as in all other Steyr rifles ever produced." Further, the level of finish and detail one would expect from an Austrian gun maker is there, making the CLII SX one of those rifles that, when your hunting buddies see it in camp, are going to say, "Wow. That's a nice rifle!"



Hoyt Pro/Am

Hoyt Pro/Am — Foley, Alabama (Feb. 22-25, 2018)



The Hoyt Pro/Am in Foley, Alabama was a great season opener with over 1,800 competitors shooting. There was an awesome crowd at the Pro Pressure Point Shootdown held on the main soccer field of the Foley Sports Tourism Complex, next to the OWA Amusement Park.

Bow Novice

Rank	Name	Total
1	Justin Barriger	424
2	Morgan Vaughn	422
3	William Adams	422

Crossbow

Rank	Name	Total
1	Heath McGill	428
2	Sammy Closser	420
3	Derek Phillips	416

Elementary Open Female

Rank	Name	Total
1	Lilli Gardner	214
2	Caitlin Smith	191
3	Kensley Ayers	187
3	Catie Elam	187

Elementary Open Male

Rank	Name	Total
1	Austin Closser	224
2	Aidan Smith	224
3	Travis Bassett	212

Elementary Pins Female

Rank	Name	Total
1	Brynley Lewis	200
2	Shannon Steeley	198
3	Katie Dempsey	190

Elementary Pins Male

Rank	Name	Total
1	Troy Bassett	206
2	Carter Ross	198
3	Devin Stewart	187

Hunter Elite

Rank	Name	Total
1	Phillip Boils	408
2	Dewayne Caylor	407
3	Joe Lucius	401

High School Open Female

Rank	Name	Total
1	Meg Curtis	382
2	Dakota Lee	370
3	McKenzie Setler	368

High School Open Male

Rank	Name	Total
1	Brooks Henry	432
2	Tanner Barker	420
3	Jacob Gardner	413

High School Pins Female

Rank	Name	Total
1	Gabriella Colbert	430
2	Katie Hemmann	406
3	Brianna Shofner	406

High School Pins Male

Rank	Name	Total
1	Clay Dempsey	430
2	Kadin Bridges	422
3	Jacob Quillen	422

High School Olympic

Rank	Name	Total
1	Jayde Alderman	332
2	Mason Kemp	249
3	Jennabeth Childers	228

Hunter

Rank	Name	Total
1	Michael Brinkley	405
2	Rob Gerling	404
3	CJ Turner	401

Jr. Eagle

Rank	Name	Total
1	Braeden Dotson	214
2	Marshal Bassett	212
3	Weber Morelli	206

Known 40

Rank	Name	Total
1	Zack Hill	434
1	Jackson Moore	434
3	Josh Morrow	432

Known 45

Rank	Name	Total
1	Doug Bell	450
2	Bill Kelly	444
3	Jason Fuson	442

Known 50

Rank	Name	Total
1	Steven Collins	428
2	Junior Sizemore	428
3	Richard Owens	428

Middle School Open Female

Rank	Name	Total
1	Isabella Parker	414
2	Hailey Wilson	406
3	Karley Dodd	404

Middle School Open Male

Rank	Name	Total
1	Kolby Crooks	448
2	Chase Morris	425
3	Tucker Edwards	420

Middle School Pins Female

Rank	Name	Total
1	Sydney Cross	402
2	Meredith Rogers	385
3	Carmen Newton	384

Middle School Pins Male

Rank	Name	Total
1	Seth Pipes	424
2	Braylin Lewis	414
3	Noah Weisenbach	412

Open A

Rank	Name	Total
1	Noah Howell	410
2	Billy Bodford	407
3	Gaius Carter	406

Open B

Rank	Name	Total
1	Daniel Brimer	423
2	Calvin Gross	421
3	Brodie Reed	416

Open C

Rank	Name	Total
1	Aaron Adams	426
2	Justin Hall	426
3	Kirk Herschberg	422

Known Pro

Rank	Name	Total
1	Donnie Thacker	532
2	Tim Gillingham	528
3	Nathan Brooks	499

Men's Pro

Rank	Name	Total
1	Jack Wallace	500
2	Dan McCarthy	498
3	Andrew Callaway	483

Senior Pro

Rank	Name	Total
1	Scott Darnell	482
2	Michael Braden	476
3	Tony Tazza	474

Women's Pro

Rank	Name	Total
1	Sharon Wallace	470
2	Emily McCarthy	467
3	Cara Kelly	465

Senior Hunter

Rank	Name	Total
1	Hugh Bryant	408
2	DaWaye Schneberger	406
3	Darin Watts	400

Hoyt Pro/Am — Foley, Alabama (Feb. 22-25, 2018)

Senior Known

Rank	Name	Total
1	Lloyd Wilson	421
2	Charlie Anderson	420
3	Ray Hickman	420

Senior Masters

Rank	Name	Total
1	David Bradbury	406
2	Gary Drouillard	402
3	Roy Pope	392

Semi Pro

Rank	Name	Total
1	Jason Hale	412
2	Travis Ballard	410
3	Jonathan Shadell	409

Senior Mens

Rank	Name	Total
1	Richard Mann	404
2	Tommy Rose	404
3	Brian Hawks	403

Super Seniors

Rank	Name	Total
1	Wayne Brasier	415
2	Louie Zannetakis	403
3	Vern Klein	402

Super Senior Known

Rank	Name	Total
1	Harold Eddie Whobrey	422
2	Joseph Montgomery	418
3	Mickey Taylor	416

Traditional

Rank	Name	Total
1	Steve Geddie	400
2	Bert Sullivan	380
3	Russ Gleason	365

Womens K-40

Rank	Name	Total
1	Hannah Moose	434
2	Olivia Hay	412
3	Ashley Holt	410

Womens K-45

Rank	Name	Total
1	Tanja Jensen	424
2	Jennifer Brooks	413
3	Ashley Ensley	410

Womens Hunter

Rank	Name	Total
1	Haley Golden	422
2	Stephanie Campbell	414
3	Rhonda Elam	412

Womens Hunter Elite

Rank	Name	Total
1	Stacy Mitchum	401
2	Rhonda Waits	361
3	Cheryl Carr	349

Womens O.A.

Rank	Name	Total
1	Natalie Brockman	383
2	Blakelee White	381
3	Traci Taylor	377

Womens O.B.

Rank	Name	Total
1	Jordan Dearman	414
2	Sarah Settlemire	408
3	Britney Sefcik	400

Senior Womens Known

Rank	Name	Total
1	Vickie Eaves	404
2	Brenda Zannetakis	402
3	Shanna Hillis	398

Womens Traditional

Rank	Name	Total
1	Kim Timberlake	308
2	Joella Bates	297
3	Raven Abt	237

Youth Traditional

Rank	Name	Total
1	Davis Kinsey	134
2	Alex King	133
3	Rocky Moore	132



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New Breed & Black Eagle Pro/Am

New Breed & Black Eagle Pro/Am — Phenix City, Alabama (Mar. 22-25, 2018)



A great time was had by military and ASA members alike during the Fort Benning Military Team Shoot held at the New Breed & Black Eagle Pro/Am at the Uchee Creek Campground Activity Center.

Bow Novice

Rank	Name	Total
1	Jesse Pinson	426
2	Jay Davidson	422
3	Spencer Fain	418

Crossbow

Rank	Name	Total
1	Daniel Zintgraff	429
2	Jason Wilkins	428
3	Sammy Closser	426

Elementary Open Female

Rank	Name	Total
1	Caitlin Smith	210
2	Matteja Metcalf	193
3	Catie Elam	189

Elementary Open Male

Rank	Name	Total
1	Colbie Wallace	214
2	Austin Closser	214
3	Hayden Adams	200

Elementary Pins Female

Rank	Name	Total
1	Shannon Steeley	218
2	Abigale Staton	216
3	Chloe VanZant	197

Elementary Pins Male

Rank	Name	Total
1	Noah Coyle	224
2	Cody Humphries	216
3	Joshua Hopper	208

Hunter Elite

Rank	Name	Total
1	Dewayne Caylor	415
2	Brian Scott	410
3	Justin Ertel	409

High School Open Female

Rank	Name	Total
1	Meg Curtis	404
2	Jalyn Sharp	397
3	Reagan Bryan	389

High School Open Male

Rank	Name	Total
1	Remington Boyer	444
2	Jacob Gardner	434
3	Matthew Burns	429

High School Pins Female

Rank	Name	Total
1	Katie Hemmann	418
2	Heather Strickland	416
3	Gabriella Colbert	403

High School Pins Male

Rank	Name	Total
1	Clay Dempsey	434
2	Camron Adkins	432
3	Kadin Bridges	425
3	Dylan Jackson	425

High School Olympic

Rank	Name	Total
1	Emily Smith	377
2	AJ Clements	361
3	Dahja Wright	344

Hunter

Rank	Name	Total
1	Paul Martin	434
2	CJ Turner	428
3	Jon Finnell	424

Jr. Eagle

Rank	Name	Total
1	Brenen Upchurch	220
2	Braeden Dotson	216
3	Shaylan Steeley	214

Known 40

Rank	Name	Total
1	Evan Clark	442
2	Lane Brandt	438
3	Austin Allen	436

Known 45

Rank	Name	Total
1	John Hempen	437
2	Perry Harpring	436
3	Zachary Myers	434

Known 50

Rank	Name	Total
1	Brady Hempen	446
2	Dane Johnson	438
3	Junior Sizemore	434

Middle School Open Female

Rank	Name	Total
1	Kelsie Lewis	414
2	Katie Skinner	408
3	Hailey Wilson	404

Middle School Open Male

Rank	Name	Total
1	Kolby Crooks	450
2	Jesse Walker	428
3	Kapt Brandt	427

Middle School Pins Female

Rank	Name	Total
1	Meredith Rogers	404
2	Caroline Grace Oglesby	398
3	Sydney Cross	395

Middle School Pins Male

Rank	Name	Total
1	Dakota Joiner	430
2	Seth Pipes	430
3	Braylin Lewis	424

Open A

Rank	Name	Total
1	Alex Knight	414
2	Edward Suders	412
3	Derek Nester	411

Open B

Rank	Name	Total
1	J Karlo Andrada	430
2	Calvin Gross	430
2	Jordan Pelkey	430

Open C

Rank	Name	Total
1	Aaron Rice	434
2	Heath Smoak	431
3	Kirk Herschberg	428

Known Pro

Rank	Name	Total
1	Tim Gillingham	528
2	Donnie Thacker	522
3	Jesse Broadwater	519

Men's Pro

Rank	Name	Total
1	Jack Wallace	500
2	Dan McCarthy	498
3	Danny Evans	492

Senior Pro

Rank	Name	Total
1	Jeff Hopkins	484
2	Tony Tazza	484
3	Bill McCall	475

Women's Pro

Rank	Name	Total
1	Kailey Johnston	476
2	Cara Kelly	472
3	Sharon Wallace	452

Senior Hunter

Rank	Name	Total
1	Darin Watts	408
2	Michael Perez	403
3	David Petet	401

New Breed & Black Eagle Pro/Am — Phenix City, Alabama (Mar. 22-25, 2018)

Senior Known

Rank	Name	Total
1	Keith Hensley	424
2	Charlie Rogers	422
3	David Parson	422

Senior Masters

Rank	Name	Total
1	Charles Buhler	412
2	Barry Henderson	406
3	Phil Fancher	397

Semi Pro

Rank	Name	Total
1	Richard Statler	412
2	Jonathan Shadell	410
3	Seth Greene	406

Senior Mens

Rank	Name	Total
1	George Ameen	409
2	Troy Carpenter	408
3	Johnnie Cooper	406

Super Seniors

Rank	Name	Total
1	Al Hankins	412
2	Randy Holley	410
3	Wayne Brasier	406

Super Senior Known

Rank	Name	Total
1	Randy Grayson	428
2	Mike Honaker	422
3	Larry Edwards	420

Traditional

Rank	Name	Total
1	Bobby Worthington	408
2	Steve Geddie	388
3	Bert Sullivan	387

Womens K-40

Rank	Name	Total
1	Olivia Hay	422
2	Hannah Moose	416
3	Briley Davis	415

Womens K-45

Rank	Name	Total
1	Tanja Jensen	442
2	Jillian Ballengee	424
3	Bailey Smith	424

Womens Hunter

Rank	Name	Total
1	Haley Golden	424
2	Michele Norton	420
3	Darlene Fugett	415

Womens Hunter Elite

Rank	Name	Total
1	Rhonda Waits	392
2	Stacy Mitchum	388
3	Cheryl Carr	364

Womens O.A.

Rank	Name	Total
1	Blakelee White	399
2	Angela Nester	391
3	Laura Moore	388
3	Kim Rigney	388

Womens O.B.

Rank	Name	Total
1	Jordan Dearman	428
2	Julie Griggs	412
3	Halle Linger	410

Senior Womens Known

Rank	Name	Total
1	Brenda Zannetakis	410
2	Dodie Schneberger	407
3	Linda Marlow	401

Womens Traditional

Rank	Name	Total
1	Lisa Gilland	351
2	Kim Timberlake	346

Youth Traditional

Rank	Name	Total
1	Isaac Wilson	182
2	Alex King	158
3	Dillon Burnette	128



Easton Southwest Shootout

Easton Southwest Shootout — Paris, Texas (Apr. 5-8, 2018)



It might have been cooler than expected in Texas, but it was an awesome welcome from the Paris Visitor Center and Lamar County Chamber of Commerce. This was the 12th Annual Southwest Shootout. The Pro Pressure Point Shootdown was exciting as known pro Jesse Broadwater hit five straight bonus rings to go from fifth to first place.

Bow Novice

Rank	Name	Total
1	Brian Wulff	426
2	Vance Fielder	425
3	Roper Wall	424

Crossbow

Rank	Name	Total
1	Daniel Zintgraff	448
2	Jason Wilkins	444
3	Heath McGill	442

Elementary Open Female

Rank	Name	Total
1	Rendyn Brooks	214
2	Caitlin Smith	202
3	Kinsley Crooks	191

Elementary Open Male

Rank	Name	Total
1	Travis Bassett	230
2	Austin Closser	222
3	Dayne Bennett	214

Elementary Pins Female

Rank	Name	Total
1	Abigale Staton	214
2	Shannon Steeley	212
3	Oakley Gross	208

Elementary Pins Male

Rank	Name	Total
1	Troy Bassett	200
1	Easton Whicker	200
3	Benjamin Varos	195

Hunter Elite

Rank	Name	Total
1	Justin Ertel	418
2	Dewayne Caylor	416
3	PJ Waits	416

High School Open Female

Rank	Name	Total
1	McKenzie Smith	381
2	Meg Curtis	370
3	Jalyn Sharp	362

High School Open Male

Rank	Name	Total
1	Ryan Dempsey	420
2	Cooper Jones	418
3	Remington Boyer	411

High School Pins Female

Rank	Name	Total
1	Katie Hemmann	418
2	Gabriella Colbert	414
3	Bailey Riley	402

High School Pins Male

Rank	Name	Total
1	Leo Varos	446
2	Shane Adams	427
3	Taylor Bell	424

High School Olympic

Rank	Name	Total
1	Natasha Leininger	349
2	Mason Kemp	285
3	Jayde Alderman	274

Hunter

Rank	Name	Total
1	Jon Finnell	419
2	CJ Turner	412
3	Ted Weisenbach	404

Jr. Eagle

Rank	Name	Total
1	Marshal Bassett	220
2	Weber Morelli	203
3	Shaylan Steeley	201

Known 40

Rank	Name	Total
1	Hunter Hogan	446
2	Drew Shanks	435
3	Holden Wingo	435

Known 45

Rank	Name	Total
1	Jake Gleitz	444
2	Dan Schubring	438
3	Riley Arnold	436
3	Bo Weaver	436

Known 50

Rank	Name	Total
1	Brady Hempen	434
2	Joe Grace	434
3	Jase Boils	433

Middle School Open Female

Rank	Name	Total
1	Kate McDonald	418
2	Isabella Parker	401
3	Georgia Kinsey	387

Middle School Open Male

Rank	Name	Total
1	Kolby Crooks	448
2	Kapt Brandt	432
3	Jesse Walker	428

Middle School Pins Female

Rank	Name	Total
1	Meredith Rogers	397
2	Lexi Smith	388
3	Aspen Nelson	383

Middle School Pins Male

Rank	Name	Total
1	Dakota Joiner	436
2	Seth Pipes	432
3	Trent Lovelace	414

Open A

Rank	Name	Total
1	James Hornbuckle	405
2	Rudy Apodaca	399
3	John Fielder	397

Open B

Rank	Name	Total
1	Timothy Madden	423
2	Jamie Hayes	423
3	Cory Pitts	422

Open C

Rank	Name	Total
1	Lucas Roy	424
2	Casey Ramos	413
3	Wesley Hodges	413

Known Pro

Rank	Name	Total
1	Jesse Broadwater	518
2	Kevin Dukes	516
3	Justin Hannah	509

Men's Pro

Rank	Name	Total
1	Dan McCarthy	484
2	Jay Moon	473
3	Jack Wallace	472

Senior Pro

Rank	Name	Total
1	Tony Tazza	482
2	Thomas Crowe	480
3	Rodger Willett	478

Women's Pro

Rank	Name	Total
1	Cara Kelly	462
2	Sharon Wallace	458
3	Megan Freeman	457

Senior Hunter

Rank	Name	Total
1	Randy Meyer	407
2	Jeff Waits	402
3	Phil Richard	402

Easton Southwest Shootout — Paris, Texas (Apr. 5-8, 2018)

Senior Known

Rank	Name	Total
1	Charlie Rogers	434
2	Miles Blair	430
3	Jesse Johnson	424

Senior Masters

Rank	Name	Total
1	Charles Buhler	404
2	David Bradbury	402
3	Gary Drouillard	395

Semi Pro

Rank	Name	Total
1	Dylan Coles	414
2	Mac Mabry	414
3	Jonathan Shadell	412

Senior Mens

Rank	Name	Total
1	Gary Mumpower	403
2	Dennis Chumley	401
3	Marty Surber	397

Super Seniors

Rank	Name	Total
1	Perry Hughes	414
2	Al Hankins	409
3	Louie Zannetakis	407

Super Senior Known

Rank	Name	Total
1	Jerry Shehane	422
2	Louie Fonseca	414
3	Mickey Taylor	412

Traditional

Rank	Name	Total
1	Bobby Worthington	403
2	Spanky Brooks	397
3	Bert Sullivan	388

Womens K-40

Rank	Name	Total
1	Sandra Compton	424
2	Olivia Hay	422
3	Savannah Vanderwier	420

Womens K-45

Rank	Name	Total
1	Connie Griffin	420
2	Rachael Lee	415
3	Bailey Smith	414

Womens Hunter

Rank	Name	Total
1	Sandy Jennings	422
2	Rebecca Bellemin	413
3	Kara Colvin	412

Womens Hunter Elite

Rank	Name	Total
1	Stacy Mitchum	404
2	Rhonda Waits	387
3	Brooke Campbell	357

Womens O.A.

Rank	Name	Total
1	Blakelee White	384
2	Kayla Dowell	354
3	Chelsea McGowan	345

Womens O.B.

Rank	Name	Total
1	Jordan Dearman	422
2	Julie Griggs	408
3	Karen Rickles	396

Senior Womens Known

Rank	Name	Total
1	Vickie Eaves	399
2	Johnnie Cook	395
3	Jonell Frantz	387

Womens Traditional

Rank	Name	Total
1	Joella Bates	354
2	Lisa Gilland	335
3	Raven Abt	314

Youth Traditional

Rank	Name	Total
1	Kyler Grogan	159
2	Joseph Hickerson	152
3	Cassidy Walters	150



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LIGHTED NOCKS





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5 SUMM FOR SU

MER PROJECTS FALL UCCESS

By Bernie Barringer

Don't wait until the last minute. You can increase your chances of shooting a nice buck this fall by doing some preliminary work in the summer.

If you're sitting here reading this deer hunting magazine in the summer, I'd say it's safe to assume you're a pretty serious deer hunter. Like most deer hunters, I think about whitetails year-round, but most of my preparation and scouting activity is done just before the season opens. Most years I hunt from opening day right through the final bell. However, these days I find myself involved in deer hunting tasks year-round, especially in the summer.

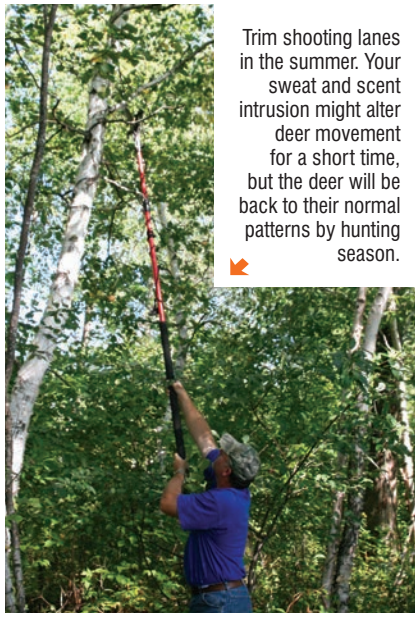
I like fishing as much as the next guy, probably way more than most, but I believe it's really important to take a few days to concentrate on hunting chores during the summer months. I have found that there are a few specific things I can do during the dog days of summer that will significantly up my odds of shooting a buck in the fall.

Preseason work has been paying off big for me. I have gone into each hunting season feeling much more prepared and confident that ever before and my success, especially in the early season, but really all season long, has proved the value of this preseason work. I encourage you to take some time to do these five tasks and I think you will agree that they are well worth it.

Trim shooting lanes

Saplings and brush grows up around your treestands every year. If you wait till the last minute to trim it, you may alert the deer to your presence. They know their woods intimately, and some fresh cut trees lying around right before the season opens might put a mature buck on edge.

In the summer, you don't have to worry about drops of sweat on the ground and you can pile the trimmings



Trim shooting lanes in the summer. Your sweat and scent intrusion might alter deer movement for a short time, but the deer will be back to their normal patterns by hunting season.

in a way that will move the deer past your stand. Using a pile of brush to gently guide movements only works if it has been done well ahead of time. Some of these subtle brush piles can make the difference between having a deer move past your stand out of range versus have the buck you want standing right in your shooting lane.

This guiding doesn't have to be a big operation. Even a couple limbs can cause the deer to alter their movement by walking around them rather than pushing through. On private land with permission, you can even hinge-cut a tree and drop it across a trail to block it.

Improve bedding areas

My friend and Iowa big-buck nut Jon Tharp taught me this one, although he says it didn't originate with him. During the winter, Jon does his hinge cutting to improve the amount of sunlight getting to the forest floor, but in the summer, he actually creates deer beds. That's right, individual beds where he wants the deer to lie down.

Bucks do not like to lay on sticks and stones, so you can make a nice bed with a rake by clearing out a small area. Bucks like to put their back against some kind of structure just like a big bass would, so deer beds are best made with some kind of cover next to it. A downed log or deadfall tree is great; a small brush-pile works as well.

Bucks will bed down where they feel secure and you can create a feeling of security for them that will keep them from wandering over to the neighbors by making a group of individual beds that allow them to see what's in front of them and have a barricade behind them. By doing several at differing angles, you allow the buck to use the one he prefers in various wind directions.

Plant a throw-and-grow brassica food plot

You don't have to be a farmer to plant a food plot. There are a couple simple tactics that work very well with little effort. You can till up a



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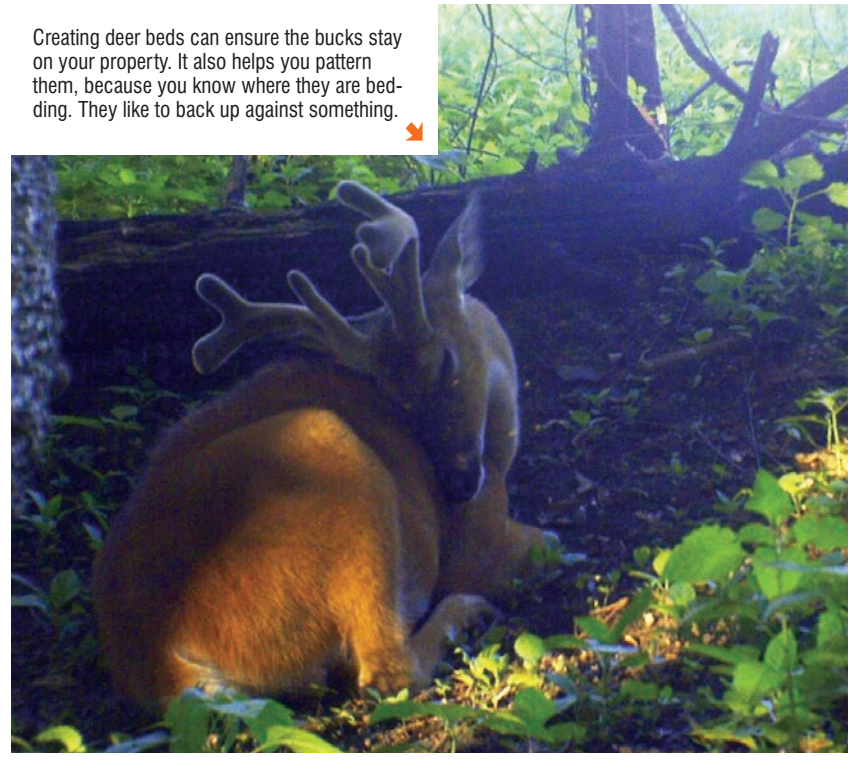
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small clearing in the woods and rake in some brassica seeds. Plants like turnips, kale, forage rape, sugar beets and radishes all work really well. The best time to do this is early August right before a rain. Deer do not pay much attention to these plants as they grow throughout the late summer into early fall so they have time to become established. But once cold weather arrives, the deer pound them. These plants become more palatable after a hard frost turns the starches in them to sugar. The deer are piling into them during the early archery season. Perfect timing. Strike right away because they get cleaned up quickly.

Another easy plot can be created if you have a treestand on the edge of a crop field. By raking these seeds right between the rows of corn or soybeans in front of your treestand, you've created a mini food plot of your own. OF course, if you don't own the land, you'll need permission, but most farmers will allow

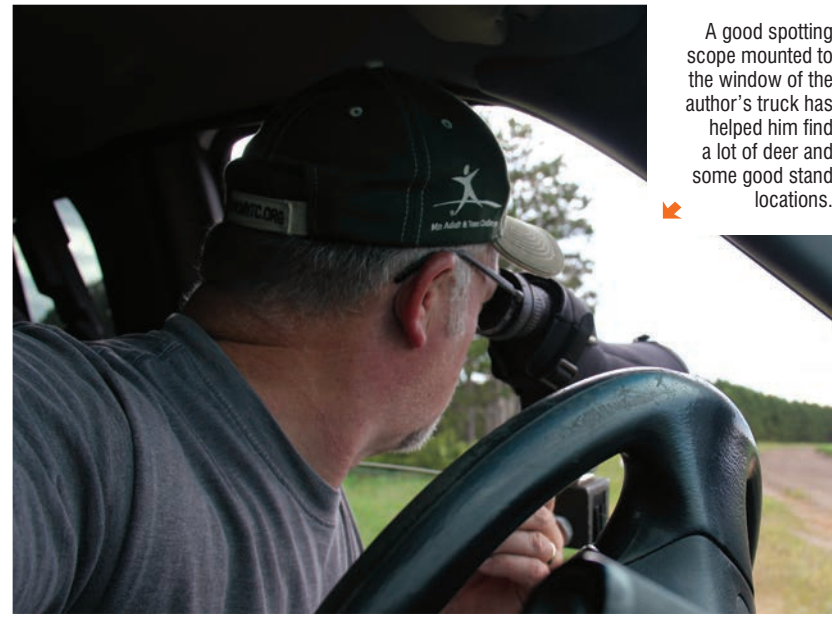
Creating deer beds can ensure the bucks stay on your property. It also helps you pattern them, because you know where they are bedding. They like to back up against something.







Scouting cameras can be used all summer to gather information on the local deer population.



A good spotting scope mounted to the window of the author's truck has helped him find a lot of deer and some good stand locations.

this. They might look at you a little funny until they see the results, but it can't hurt to ask.

When the corn or beans are harvested, the brassicas are sitting there ready for the hungry deer. With the right planting timetable, these little secret spots are often at their peak in perfect timing for the October archery seasons.

Keep those scouting cameras working

Far too many hunters wait until just before hunting season to put out their scouting cameras. I have a half-dozen cameras working all summer. I have them on mineral sites and in bedding areas. Not only is it fun to watch the bucks' antlers grow and the fawns rapid-daily maturing, but you can learn a lot about the deers' preferred travel corridors. This is important information that will help you pattern the deer later on.

In the summer, you can be a little more aggressive about moving about in areas the deer are using. While you would never consider violating a buck bedding area during the fall, you can safely check a camera in there every couple weeks during the summer. Spray down with Scent Killer to reduce your intrusion and check the cameras no more than twice a month. Check just prior to a rain whenever possible.

Additionally, cameras help keep tabs on which bucks are in the area. By taking an inventory of them, you can make a "hit list" or at least have a feel for the property's potential. Without a knowledge of what bucks are living in the area, you might decide to hold out for a 140-class buck or better when there aren't any. Possibly the best way to get an inventory of the deer is with a pile of corn near their normal feeding area. You'll get a picture of most every deer in the area within a week or so. Check your local regulations before doing so.

Spend time behind a spotting scope

By the end of July, bucks have their headgear nearly fully grown. At this time, they may be more visible during daylight than any other time of the year. They readily feed on soybeans and alfalfa during the last



Bucks will be around water in the summer. Find their crossings and put up stands prior to the season.



This buck was shot the first week of the season. Start your hunting season in the summer and increase your odds of early-season success.

couple hours of daylight. Find a high point where you can mount a spotting scope to your truck's window and watch their evening movements into the fields. This will help you keep track of the bucks and where they like to enter the field in the prevailing conditions. Take note of the wind direction and where the bucks enter the fields during these conditions. This info will help you choose stand locations.



Bachelor groups of bucks are together at this time and nothing makes your heart beat faster than seeing a bunch of nice bucks together in a field you will be hunting in just a few weeks.

So, don't spend all your time lying by the pool or fishing in the summer. You could be missing out on some enjoyable work that could pay off in a big way when the season rolls around. Consider trying a couple of these tactics and just see if it doesn't improve your hunting come fall.

IMPROVEMENTS ON PUBLIC LAND

Most of these tips are aimed at people who hunt private land. It might surprise you to find that you can use all five of these strategies on public hunting land in many states. Until a few years ago it never occurred to me to improve deer habitat on the public land I hunt, until one day when I was scouting I came across a half-acre of nice green plants. Seems someone had planted a small food plot of forage rape in a natural clearing right front of their treestand. Certain that this was illegal on state land, I called up the game warden and was told that there is no law against it in Minnesota.

From that point I realized that there are many things I could do to improve even the public hunting properties I hunt. I have improved the bedding areas, created deer beds, inventoried the deer, altered travel patterns by blocking and improving trails and even scattered seeds of plants deer find desirable.

Of course, by helping yourself, you are helping everyone else that hunts that land. And there is the possibility that you may arrive to hunt and find someone else taking advantage of your hard work, but I have found that more often than not, most other hunters do not even notice the improvements I have made and I now know some things that most hunters don't, such as where the bucks are bedding and how they are travelling through the property. I have a better inventory of the bucks that live on the property and their feeding and bedding patterns. For sure, check your state laws before you do anything. Each state is different in their laws, and many public lands are county or federal, which brings even more possible liberties or restrictions into the mix. And there are normally workarounds you can use. For example, if it's not legal to cut brush to direct deer traffic, you can pile dead branches you gathered from the area. Be creative!





WATCH OUT FOR FOOD PLOT DISASTERS

By Judd Cooney

From weed-choked plots to the neighbor's cattle, there's plenty that can go wrong with your food plots. The author shares some horror stories from more than two decades of growing food plots for paying hunters.

I could tell from the farmer's tone of voice that all was not well with my Iowa food plots and his question of whether I wanted the good news first or the bad did nothing to quell my apprehensions. I figured knowing the good news might override the bad so opted for it first. Wrong! The good news was the weeds inundating the upper food plot above the old house were 6 to 8 feet tall. The bad news was the damnable weeds in the 1 acre plot below the house were 10 to 12 feet tall!

So much for a sure-fire way to control Iowa's weeds in my food plots until I could get them planted with brassicas in the fall. When I first started outfitting in Iowa, I wanted to hedge my bets and increase my client's chances of success during the fall and early winter whitetail hunting with food plots. I was warned that Iowa's soil is 85-percent weed seed and food plots may not be the slam dunk I was planning on. If anything, that percentage is on the low side of the scale.

When a food plot seed supplier offered to provide rye grass seed that, when planted in the early spring, would come up thick and heavy and inhibit weed growth I quickly took him up on his offer. This would definitely make it easier to disk down the grass in the early fall and plant with my favorite brassica mix — Big-N-Beasty (B-N-B) Brassicas from Frigid Forage of Onamia, Minnesota. This mixture contains high-protein annuals, forage rapes, sugar beets, forage turnips and radishes, that when planted in late summer or early fall provide exceptional deer drawing power for bowhunters and late-season firearms hunters alike. I had been using this as my main fall food plot crop along with Autumn Quick Plot which is a mix of annuals and biennials that is almost equal to the B-N-B Brassicas with winter peas, winter wheat, rye, forage radishes, rape, turnips and common vetch.

Unfortunately, the dry spring and summer didn't get the rye germinated and the weeds took over, which meant extra days and labor mowing the weeds, disking the plots and replanting. You'd think I would have learned a lesson, but I'm always trying to find the best and most effective way to grow good food plot so this last spring when a local seed supplier, that I let predator hunt on our leases after season, offered a half dozen bags of free Roundup ready soybeans, I readily took him up on his offer. Our

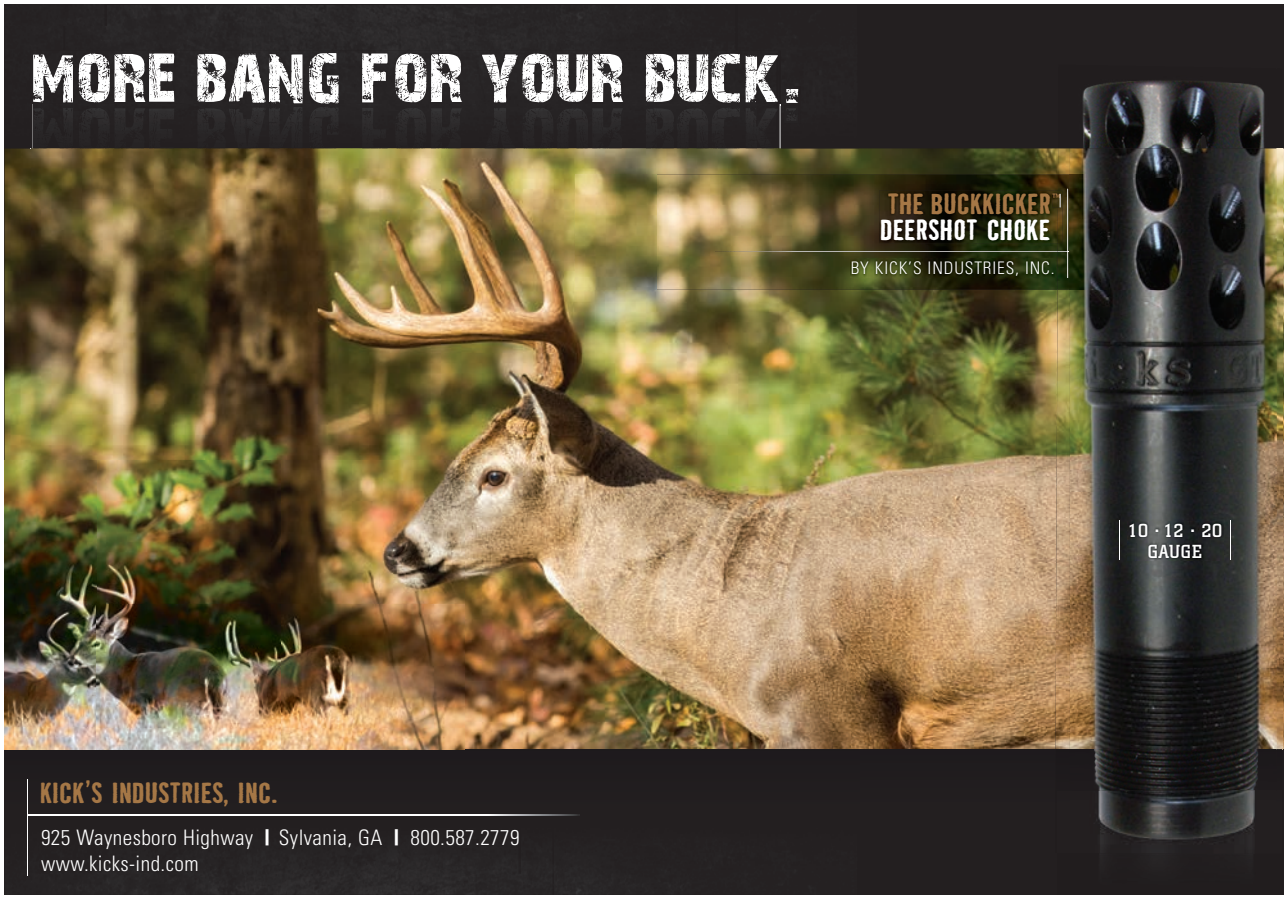


Having the proper equipment to disc ground, spray weeds and broadcast fertilizer and seed will help avoid many food plot disasters.

head guide and Wisconsin farmer, Jody Harrison hauled his Kubota tractor from Wisconsin to Iowa and when we got through planting the soybeans our food plots were as smooth and clean as any home garden plot.

With Jody's efficient equipment we added several new plots bordering the two-track roadway near trophy producing stands on several major ridgetop crossings. In the past, the deer would cross through these openings from one timbered slope to the adjacent one. The narrow confines didn't give the client much time to judge the trophy qualities of a moving buck, which had resulted in lost shot opportunities, a miss or two and misjudged, ground-shrinkage bucks in the past. I figured a good lush food plot along the ridgetop would stop the deer for a nibble or two giving the shooter a bit more time. With an abundant supply of free soybean seed, we didn't shirk on the amount of seed used. I figured, if the soybeans did well, I could leave some untouched and plant a section of the plot to brassicas or Autumn Quick Plot to give me double the attracting power. Great plan!

I talked with the landowner in early summer and he said the food plots looked good, but the deer were really hammering them. He wasn't kidding cause when I got back the first part of August all the food plots looked as if we had planted and fertilized a prime weed crop. The weeds and grass around the plots were a foot high and those in the food plots were 6 to 8 feet tall. The soybeans were almost non-existent due to the high number of deer nipping off the tops at the most critical stage. Hind sight is always 20-20 and I realized that all the farmers on our leases had planted corn, which was planted and came up much later. This focused the deer's full attention on my tender, young and green soybeans. Had there been adjacent fields of soybeans around my food plots to spread the use, things might have worked the way I planned. When the beans in the food plots died out early in the growing season the weeds made good use of the fertilizer we'd put on. As if they needed it! Once again, I spent a lot of extra time





Be sure to buy quality seeds when planting your food plots. The up-front cost is a deal compared to wasted time and money later.

and money, mowing, spraying and working up the food plots to get something out of them for fall. So much for the free soybean seed. From now on I will spray the plots in the spring when the weeds first pop up and then spray them again when they need it during the early summer and again just before disking and planting the plots in August.

Weeds can definitely be a major food plot problem but no weeds or anything else can also create serious food plot setbacks. There is little doubt that the two major food sources for deer throughout agricultural areas are corn and soybeans. Each spring we have our landowners do what they are best equipped to do. Plant their fields like always. We then mark out a corn or soybean food plot in August for them to leave in the field come harvest time. Might be an acre or more, or as little as a quarter acre depending on location. We pay them the going rate for the crop produced. Some areas we utilize every year for food plots and in some instances, we will go into the field during our August food plot planting and disk down some standing corn or soybeans and over-seed it with brassicas. A very effective and productive way of having a highly-palatable species available to draw deer from early bow season through the late season. Something that clovers, alfalfas and other food plot species can't do on their own.

Several years ago, crops and especially soybeans did not do well so on the advice of another seed supplier



If you hunt agricultural land, offer to pay the farmer to leave a section of crop standing as a food plot.



When things go right, not only do food plots produce a lot of tonnage, but they also become more palatable and sought out by deer.



I simply went over a portion of one of our sparse low-yielding soybean food plots and broadcast fertilizer and Big-N-Beasty brassicas. I timed the planting just before a forecasted rain so the minuscule seeds would get washed into the soil. I came back in October expecting soybeans interspersed with lush brassicas. Nothing. Seems the farmer had added a pre-emergent herbicide to his Roundup spray, which prevented the brassicas from growing. I learned my lesson on that fiasco and now make sure I check with the landowner as to what they sprayed their crops with BEFORE I plant. Even that didn't stop the same thing from happening a couple years later in our most productive food plot where, I had been following this procedure for 20 years with deadly results. My partner and I drove down a sizeable plot of 150-bushel per acre corn, fertilized and planted brassicas. Come October we expected to see the shooting lanes filled with lush ankle-deep brassicas and instead found nice black DIRT! Seems the contractor who sprayed the farmer's fields with Roundup had left a partial tank of pre-emergent herbicide, figuring it wouldn't cause any harm. Yeah Right! Now we check with the farmer and have him double check with the spray contractor as well as insisting on no surprises in the spray tank long before we expend the money and effort of planting.

Sometimes food plot's attractiveness can cause problems itself. The brassicas give off a strong scent that can be a real draw to neighboring livestock and if the fences surrounding your property are not in good shape you can have some real problems.

On one of our leases, when I returned in October I found that the neighbor's cattle had been hammering our brassica food plots. Fortunately, I had several large food plots on the lease and they hadn't been on them long enough to completely demolish them. The neighboring farmer didn't think much of the damage and more or less laughed it off at the time. The following year I planted a large 3½-acre plot adjacent to the timber, in a large CRP field, with corn in the spring, with the idea of disking up some of it and planting brassicas the first part



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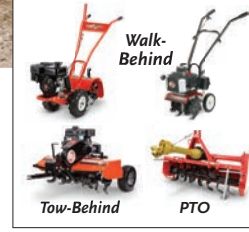
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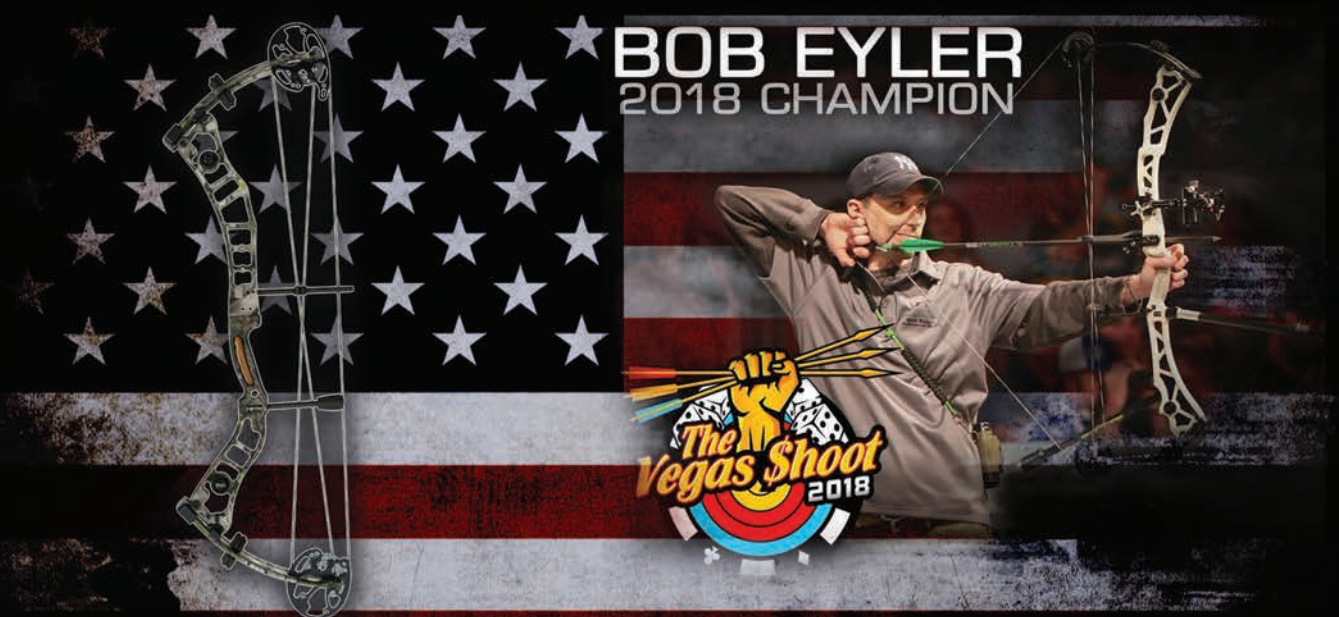
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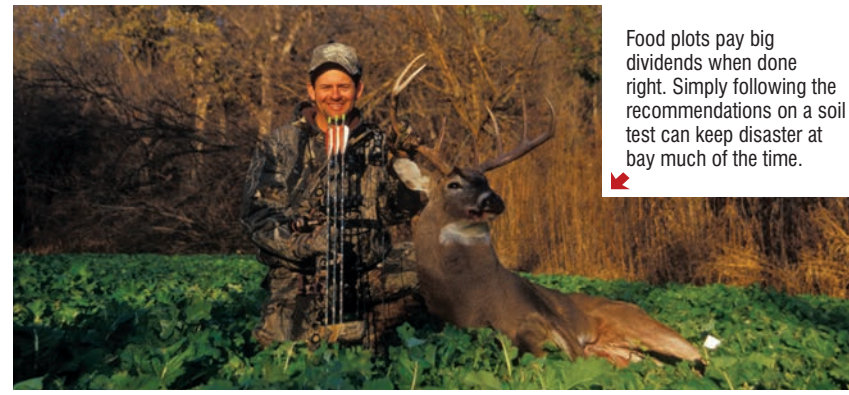
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Food plots pay big dividends when done right. Simply following the recommendations on a soil test can keep disaster at bay much of the time.

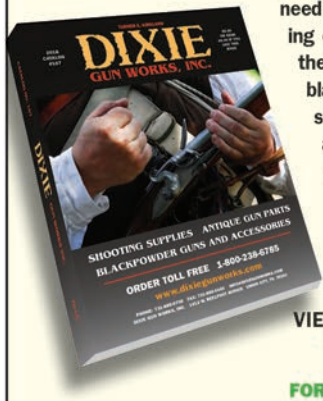
of August. When I returned in August I found a dozen head of his cattle had demolished my corn crop and had to replant the whole thing to brassicas. He again laughed it off and said that come harvest time he'd dump a truck full of corn on the ravished field. Hardly, as that would constitute baiting by Iowa law and I'd be the one with the problem.

With his cavalier attitude, I figured I had better put a stop to this crap, once and for all. I filed a civil damage complaint in court for $1,500, about what it cost me in time, seed and equipment to replant. With the photographic evidence and expense records I presented, and the fact that this had happened before also substantiated with photos, it took the judge about two minutes to find him guilty and order him to pay me. We haven't had a problem with any neighboring livestock since that day. Word travels fast in farm country.

Years ago, I had hunted upper Michigan when unlimited baiting was legal. I bowhunted over a huge pile of frozen sugar beets and was astounded by how much the deer relished them. A couple years later I got a coffee can full of experimental Roundup Ready sugar beet seed from one of our landowners. My food plot assistant, who also worked for the landowner, and I planted the tiny seeds, in one of our small food plots in the spring, by hand, with loving care. Peter, my helper sprayed the plot with Roundup several times during summer and early fall and that hunting season the deer went nuts over the huge, sweet beets. I was ready to get into the big-time sugar beet food plot planting mode, but unfortunately the EPA outlawed Roundup Ready sugar beets for general use the next year. Seed was unavailable unless you were a registered, big-time sugar beet farmer. For several years I tried to grow regular sugar beets, but quickly found they were too finicky and labor intensive for food plots. Roundup Ready sugar beets are back on the food plot market today, but after trying them a couple seasons without much success, I'll just stick to the sure things like a good fall planted brassica mix and reap the dividends of my efforts at least until another food plot disaster comes along.

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* Austrian Winter Peas
* Buckwheat
* Lab Lab
* Chicory
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2018 BUYER'S GUIDE

APPAREL

Realtree Edge

The camo master has done it again. Realtree's all-new Edge is made up of warm grays and browns — colors that are found in the woods all year — and a variety of photo-realistic leaves and branches arranged in a way to match the forest floor and canopy. Strategically placed pockets of shadows and highlights mean you won't look like a black blob in the distance. Arguably the most advanced and flat-out coolest part of the new pattern is the crisscrossing branches, limbs and a large, vertical, nondescript trunk arranged in such a way that Edge actually disrupts your human form at any range.

MSRP: N/A

www.realtree.com



Hell's Canyon CFS-WD Rain Suit

Browning water/windproof Hell's Canyon CFS-WD rain suit will keep you dry whether you're on stand or maneuvering on a stalk for deer or other game. The top and bottom have fully taped seams, are compact and packable thanks to the lightweight fabric, and come with drawcord adjustability in the pants and hood. The top has several pockets placed just right for accessing your gear or keeping your hands warm along with a safety harness access port.

MSRP: Varies

www.browning.com



Sitka Early Season Whitetail

Sitka's new Early Season Whitetail Series is the lightest line in the whitetail realm, with complete Polygiene odor control and durable, quiet fabrics that are body-mapped for absolute breathability on warm weather hunts. The ESW Shirt offers an innovative minimalist design maximizing stealth and ventilation. The ESW Pant incorporates a revolutionary lightweight 4-way stretch polyester with durability and elasticity to move with the hunter when climbing in and out of a treestand. The streamlined ESW Hat and Glove complete the series built to beat the heat but capable of extending well into the season with easy integration into cooler weather apparel systems.

MSRP: $129 and up

www.sitkagear.com





Rocky Prohunter

The Rocky Prohunter reversible parka and bib are new additions this year and designed for deer hunters who want the flexibility of wearing the same apparel in the stand or blind. Fully waterproof and using Rocky's ScentIQ Atomic scent control technology, the Prohunter parka and bib have Venator camo on one side and Venator Black on the other. This gives hunters two options for being camouflaged in the stand or darkness of a blind, or for predator hunting at night.

MSRP: $129

www.rockyboots.com



Huntworth Disruption

Huntworth's lineup of warm, effective and value-priced apparel adds the Disruption camouflage pattern this year. Disruption utilizes computer-generated graphics featuring a high level of random and abstract visual noise to help you remain undetected in the environment. Disruption is available in outerwear including the Heavyweight Softshell Jacket, a comfortable double-layer 300-gram jacket with DWR finish to repel light rain and snow and an inner storm flap, high stand collar, and long back hem to keep out wind and rain. It also has a Sherpa fleece-lined interior for extra warmth and is quiet on stand or while stalking. Disruption also is available in pants, gloves and headwear.

MSRP: Varies

www.huntworthgear.com



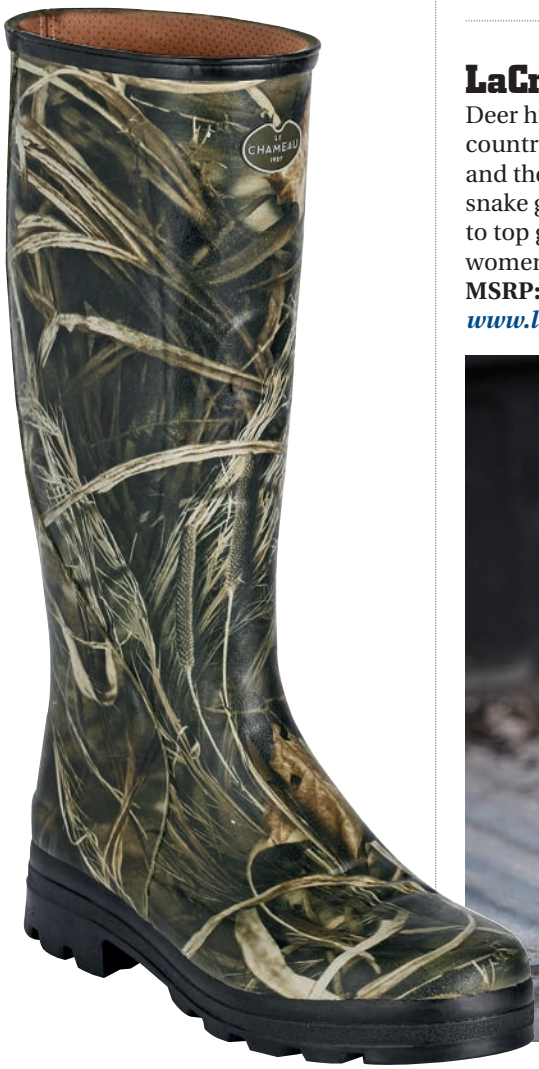
BOOTS

Le Chameau Traqueur

Le Chameau's Traqueur combines durability with excellent traction capabilities for a wide range of outdoors pursuits. The Traqueur has natural rubber upper with Kevlar reinforcement technology to protect against abrasion from groundcover. A moisture-wicking, anti-allergenic, microfiber On-Steam lining keeps feet dry and comfortable, while the high-performance shank reinforcements support your feet.

MSRP: $219

www.lechameau.com/us/



Rocky Grizzly



The new Grizzly collection from Rocky offers rugged durability with a traditional lace-up boot with a budget-friendly price. The Grizzly line has a tri-density outsole for better shock absorption and dual EVA mid-layer cushioning system. With full-grain leather and 900-denier nylon uppers, and the Rocky VP waterproof layer, you'll be able to battle weather conditions with ease while staying warm and dry. Grizzly boots will be available with 200 or 1,000 grams of 3M Thinsulate insulation. They're available in Realtree Edge or brown.

MSRP: $159.99

www.rockyboots.com

LaCrosse Venom

Deer hunters may not think about snakes all the time but in many parts of the country they're definitely something to be aware of during summer work days and the early season. LaCrosse's Venom snakeboots are designed with a flexible snake guard and scent-suppressing, waterproof internal liner. Laces from toe to top give you flexibility for a tight or loose fit, and the Venom is available in women's sizes and a youth model, all in Realtree APG.

MSRP: $200

www.lacrossefootwear.com



ARCHERY PRODUCTS

Trophy Taker Tripwire

Tripwire is a buss cable-driven fall-away arrow rest that features a rugged polymer and metal construction. Offering a sleek, quiet and accurate rest like never seen before, the Tripwire is loaded with a superior dampening system and a smooth spring and launcher design. The Tripwire will be available in Stealth Black and left or right-handed configuration.

MSRP: $39.99

www.trophytaker.com



Ramcat Lacerator

The Ramcat Lacerator Crossbow Bolt Combo includes three Ramcat Lacerator carbon crossbow bolts, three field points for practice shooting, three flat nocks and three half-moon nocks, plus a trio of devastating Ramcat broadheads. The patented Airfoil tip of the Ramcat heads are aerodynamically superior, eliminating wind planing for field point accuracy even when fired from today's magnum crossbows. On impact, the airfoil science of Ramcat continues to work by moving body mass away from the broadhead body and bolt shaft, resulting in a wound channel dramatically larger than the actual cut diameter of the head. The Ramcat Lacerator Crossbow Bolt Combo is available with 20- or 22-inch bolts, and with 100- or 125-grain Ramcat broadheads.

MSRP: $59.99

www.ramcatbroadheads.com





HXS Pro Series

Hunter Safety System has revamped its popular Pro Series safety harness, bringing it back with lighter high-tech materials and ElimiShield Hunt Scent. The Pro Series has been redesigned with a lightweight, interlocking fabric in the front and ventilating mesh in the back and shoulder areas. It weighs just 2.9 pounds, 40 percent lighter than the original version, and now has binocular/rangefinder straps, two zippered chest pockets, six gear pockets and a charging port for phone or flashlight. ElimiShield Hunt Scent is locked into the fabric and helps control odors by attacking the bacteria that causes them.

MSRP: $139

www.hssvest.com

ARCHERY PRODUCTS

Center Point Primal 330

The Center Point Primal 330 crossbow has an aluminum rail with shoot-through riser that provides repeatability, accuracy, integrated spring stops for a quiet vibration-free shot and ultimate stealth performance. It is designed with narrow 26.5-inch cocked/29-inch uncocked compression fiberglass limbs for compact mobility, an adjustable butt stock and an adjustable fore-grip with oversized finger guards. The Primal 330 delivers a customized and comfortable fit. These new crossbows employ an intelligent and functional blend of new and existing technology to provide premium performance.

MSRP: $399

www.crosman.com

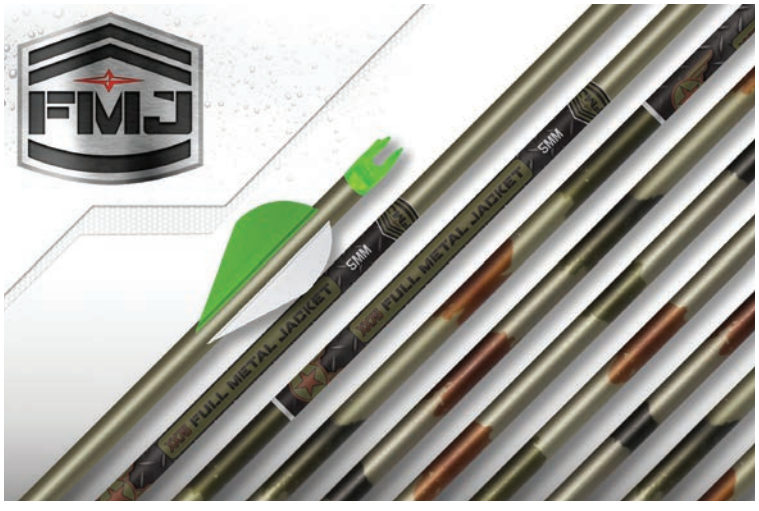


Easton FMJ 5MM Camo Hunter

Many bowhunters will remember the classic XX75 Camo Hunter arrows — a mainstay in quivers going back to the 1970s. Easton will, for a limited time, produce the 5MM FMJ in the retro Camo Hunter pattern. The special edition FMJ shafts will use the same construction as the other Full Metal Jacket arrows — an aluminum jacket over a high-strength micro carbon core — which offers enhanced penetration over standard carbon arrows. The results from this combination are heavier blood-trails and cleaner kills. The limited 5MM retro is available in four spine sizes: 500, 400, 340 and 300.

MSRP: $91.99 per half-dozen

www.eastonarchery.com



Hoyt Carbon RX-1

Hoyt's new Carbon RX-1 features a carbon riser designed for performance and rugged durability in the field. At 32 inches axle to axle, the Carbon RX-1 hits speeds up to 340 fps, boasts a 6-inch brace height and weighs 3.9 pounds. The bow is offered in peak draw weights of 40, 50, 60, 65, 70 and 80 pounds. The ZT Hyper Cam comes in three different draw-length options. No press is required when making draw-length adjustments.

MSRP: $1,499 and up

www.hoyt.com



Dead Ringer Bone Collector Sights



Dead Ringer teamed up with the Bone Collector team to capitalize on their years of experience and produce a full line of bow sights. This new lineup offers a sight to meet nearly every need and budget. The sights boast metal construction and, depending on the model, feature a top .019 pin that glows in complete darkness. They also have tool-less windage and elevation adjustments and a rheostat sight light. Sights in the line include the Starvation Bead, Tack Driver, Tack Driver DT and The Wheel.

MSRP: $40 and up

www.deadringerhunting.com

Mathews Triax

Built for the bowhunting woods, Mathews' new flagship bow, the Triax, packs a lot of punch into a compact, maneuverable package. Measuring 28 inches axle to axle and weighing 4.4 pounds, the Triax hits speeds of 343 fps. The Triax is outfitted with some of Mathews' most innovative archery features: the Crosscentric Cam, Enhanced Harmonic Stabilizer and system, Rock Mods and other top features. Noise and recoil were, as always, examined to see if reductions could be made in both, and they succeeded. The Triax comes in several options including the popular Optifade Subalpine and Optiface Elevated II camo patterns.

MSRP: $1,099 and up

www.mathewsinc.com



Obsession Fixation

With the Obsession Fixation, a new riser design for 2018 reduces bow flex during the draw cycle for superior accuracy, while a new Anti-Torque Cable Rod reduces cam lean and torque. The Fixation utilizes Obsession's Two-Track cam design for an unmatched, smooth draw. The Fixation produces IBO speeds up to 358 FPS and comes in 6- and 7-inch brace heights, with either the M configuration for smooth shooting or XP for speed and performance. The Fixation weighs 4.3 pounds, has a 32¼-inch axle-to-axle length and is available in draw lengths from 23.5 inches to 30.5 inches.

MSRP: $999

www.obsessionbows.com

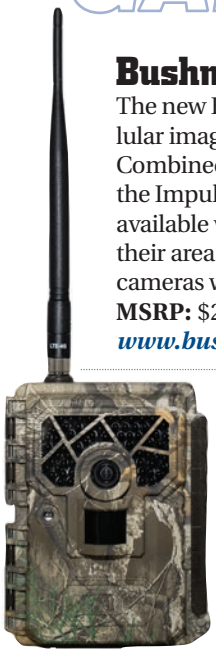


GAME CAMERAS



Bushnell Impulse

The new Bushnell Impulse cellular trail camera is the result of innovative engineering that delivers cellular images quicker and better than ever before. It features 20MP HD Images and true 1080p HD video. Combined with a six-month battery life, 0.2-second trigger speed and No Glow flash that reaches 100 feet, the Impulse is the high-performance cellular trail camera consumers have been waiting for. Impulse is available with AT&T and Verizon options so consumers can pick the one that offers the best coverage in their area. Yet, either option will deliver photos to devices using any cellular provider. Active GPS tracks the cameras whereabouts at all times, deterring theft and allowing hunters to quickly locate their cameras.
MSRP: $299.99
www.bushnell.com



Blackhawk LTE

New for 2018 is the latest LTE technology that will improve battery life and the speed of the wireless functions. The Blackhawk LTE continues with the ability to send texts, emails or both within the Covert Wireless mobile app and web-portal. The app includes guest access abilities and the power to retrieve high resolution images. The Blackhawk LTE sends instant pictures or five second videos using Verizon's approved cellular network. Reliability at its finest, Covert Scouting Cameras continues to revolutionize the wireless trail camera industry.
MSRP: $439.99
www.covertscoutingcameras.com

Moultrie M-BTi

Check your images without traipsing through the woods with the Bluetooth-enabling system of the Moultrie M-BTi and Moultrie Smartset app on your phone. The combo was developed based on consumer feedback that camera setup needed to be easier. The time and date automatically sync with your phone, making setup a breeze. The M-BTi is based on the Moultrie Management Series (M-Series) features and specs. All physical buttons have been removed from the interface, making for a smaller overall footprint, and the Smartset app is easy to use.
MSRP: $179.99
www.moultriefeeders.com/m-bti-game-camera





Reconyx HyperFire 2

Since 2002, RECONYX has been designing and manufacturing the best performing, most reliable trail cameras available. That tradition continues with the new HyperFire 2. We think that it is the best camera we have ever made and are backing that up with a five year warranty! The HyperFire 2 comes with a quarter-second trigger speed, the best motion sensing available and new NoGlow GEN3 High Output Infrared night vision that reaches to 150 feet! The nighttime images are crisp and clear with no graininess or blurring, while the daytime photos are rich in color and clarity. All this, at a lower price point than we have ever offered.
MSRP: $399.99
www.reconyx.com

Stealth Cam G45NGX

Building upon the proven capabilities of its G Series trail camera line, Stealth Cam introduces the new G45NGX featuring its Smart Illumination Technology. This technology automatically adjusts IR output based on changing lighting conditions, such as dusk and dawn. The G45NGX is a 22MP Power IR, No Glo, 1080P High Definition camera with a sub ½ second trigger speed. The camera is configured with long list of features including adjustable PIR detection range, Matrix blur reduction to ensure a clear subject in night shots as well as pre-programmed Quick Sets and Retina low light sensitivity to maximize IR output to deliver a well lit 100-foot night time range. The G45NGX also features Stealth Cam's best camo pattern to date, for unmatched concealment when deployed.
MSRP: $189.99
www.gsmoutdoors.com/stealth-cam



ACCESSORIES

Dead Down Wind WindScout



Wind can bust you or wind can hide you. The new WindScout from Dead Down Wind detects the slightest wind direction using advanced vapor technology. The WindScout dispenser emits up to a remarkable 400 "puffs" of smoke per cartridge. An included USB charger keeps the battery topped off, while a lanyard makes sure it's always at the ready. The Dead Down Wind WindScout unit with smoke cartridge, battery, USB charger and lanyard will be available along with additional two-pack smoke cartridges.
MSRP: $24.99
www.deaddownwind.com

Tink's E-Scent Dispenser

Tink's is giving whitetail deer hunters more options with new lure dispensers and additions to the popular Boost 73 line of attractants. Advanced vape technology in the new E-Scent dispenser emits up to 400 puffs of enticing Tink's scent per cartridge. An included USB charger keeps the battery topped off, while a lanyard makes sure it's always at the ready. Tink's E-Scent comes with a synthetic #69 Doe-In-Rut scent cartridge. Additional cartridges include synthetic #1 Doe-P, synthetic Trophy Buck and synthetic #60 Doe-in-Rut scents.
MSRP: $24.99
www.tinks.com



Code Blue Grave Digger

One of the most popular and effective scrape scents — Code Blue Grave Digger — is back by popular demand from deer hunters who know it works. Grave Digger is soil impregnated with scent using proprietary technology, allowing the scent to be released over a 30-day period. Just dig a small hole, pour in some Grave Digger and cover with dirt. Rain helps strengthen the intensity, and you can get better camera survey images with a hot scrape while also firing up bucks during hunting season. Grave Digger is available in Doe Estrous and Scrape Mate (buck urine).
MSRP: $14.99
www.codebluescents.com



WRC Scent Reflex

Scent Reflex Technology has been added to the popular Wildlife Research Center's Active Scrape, Golden Scrape, Golden Estrus Elk and Trails End 307 scents, making them even more effective. Scent Reflex Technology is a cutting edge proprietary breakthrough developed over a period of years. Scent Reflex Technology is an enhancement that increases the chances of a stronger and more consistent response from deer and elk when used properly.
MSRP: Varies
www.wildlife.com



FOXPRO BuckPro

The FOXPRO BuckPro gives you the ultimate advantage while chasing the most commonly hunted big-game animal in North America. The unit comes with 25 whitetail sounds and 10 predator sounds. The BuckPro uses a single, high-efficiency Mylar cone speaker. Connect an external speaker to the jack on the side of the call for even more volume. While moving, a mature buck will likely come downwind. The system controls up to three BuckPro units from one remote for directional advantage. An elastomeric keypad provides effortless use, even with gloves. It also has category files for easy navigation through sounds. The remote has a power on/off switch, volume up/down buttons, scroll up/down buttons, a mute and much more.
MSRP: $169
www.gofoxpro.com



GUNS, AMMO & SHOOTING ACCESSORIES

Green Mountain Rifle Barrel

Since 1976, Green Mountain Rifle Barrel Company (GMRB) has offered top-quality rifle barrels and excellent pricing to dealers and individual customers alike. Our barrels are available fully machined, finished and ready to assemble, or as a rifled "blank" for your own custom project. We start with gun rated "chrome-molly" alloy and stainless-steel bars. From raw bars we cut, deep-hole drill, finish ream to a precise, uniform size and button rifle our barrels all by talented operators with conventional, carefully maintained machinery.

MSRP: Varies

www.gmriflebarrel.com



Mossberg 6.5 Creedmoor

Mossberg is now chambering 14 of its bolt-action rifles in 6.5mm Creedmoor including 10 in its Patriot hunting line. The 6.5 Creedmoor has become immensely popular with hunters and target shooters for its long-range accuracy, efficiency and lethality. All 6.5mm Creedmoor rifles feature a 1:8-twist rate, 5R rifling with 20 or 22-inch-barrel length on most models and Mossberg's user-adjustable Lightning Bolt Action Trigger System. Five of the models feature a threaded barrel for adding a suppressor or muzzle brake.

MSRP: Varies

www.mossberg.com



Havak PH1

Carrying a wallet-friendly price tag, the Seekins Havak PH1 is the ultimate custom bolt-action rifle designed with the everyday hunter in mind. Seekins stayed true to its innovative roots in 2018 by breaking into the stock industry with the introduction of Professional Composites. Honing in on the importance of weight and durability, the PH1 now comes with the carbon fiber ProComp CH1 stock accompanied by a carbon fiber magazine. Aside from the Timney 510 trigger and LimbSaver recoil pad, all other parts that make up the PH1 were designed and/or produced by Seekins Precision.

MSRP: $2,200

www.seekinsprecision.com





Redding Reloading

Redding Reloading Equipment introduces a series of die sets for the new 24 Nosler Cartridge. Based on the popular 22 Nosler, this cartridge will be at home in semi-auto and bolt guns. Die sets initially will be offered in Standard 2-Die, Deluxe 3-Die, Premium 2 and 3-Die sets, Type–S Bushing Style and National Match configurations with the Competition Seating Die. Redding Reloading Equipment has focused on building the finest quality, American made products for the precision handloading market since 1946.

MSRP: $140 and up.

www.redding-reloading.com

Barrett Fieldcraft

Barrett Firearms Fieldcraft rifles are designed to provide maximum efficiency and accuracy in a lightweight, precision firearm. Each Fieldcraft is designed to be as light as possible for its specific caliber to allow the rifle to be carried farther and longer in the field. It features a carbon-fiber stock design with a high strength-to-weight ratio and stiff construction to properly support the action and barrel, while remaining comfortable to shoot even with heavy recoiling calibers. The trigger is tuned to be crisp and light to maximize accuracy potential. Actions are scaled for each family of chamberings. The high-precision stainless steel barrels are machined to ideal contours and lengths for the specific application and caliber. Initial Fieldcraft rifles will be available in select popular calibers and include left-hand models. Expanded caliber offerings and configurations are being developed now.

MSRP: $1,799-$1,849

www.barrett.net



Weatherby Vanguard First Lite

The first thing hunters notice about the Vanguard First Lite big-game rifle, aside from Weatherby's legendary fit and finish, is the gun's stock. The Monte Carlo design, is appointed with innovative First Lite Fusion camo. The pattern is a proprietary mix of "cracka-lature" shapes and colors derived through nature-based algorithms and oriented for macro and micro disruption. Hunters can select their Vanguard First Lite in four flat-shooting, hard-hitting Weatherby Magnum calibers (.240 Wby Mag, .257 Wby Mag, 6.5-300 Wby Mag, and .300 Wby Mag) and four traditional rounds (.270 Win, .308 Win, .30-06 Sprg and .300 Win).

MSRP: $1,090 and up.

www.weatherby.com



Bell and Carlson Stocks

"Long Range hunting? You need this on your hunting rifle to get a good cheek weld and still see through those big scopes with high rings! You wanted it on your rifles to shoot paper and steel. Shouldn't you have it on your rifle to take that long, clean shot on an animal?" Bell and Carlson stocks are available for a wide variety of rifles and shooting disciplines, including a Remington 700 long action BDL floorplate. This stock is designed to be free-floated and has an adjustable cheek piece .475-inch below boreline in the lowest position and 1.125-inch total upward adjustment. This model has a computer designed and CNC machined full length aluminum bedding system through the forearm for strength and stiffness. An additional aluminum "tail piece" extends from the bedding block through the grip area for more strength and rigidity. It's available in 13 color designs.

MSRP: $395

www.bellandcarlson.com





Remington Core-Lokt

It's hard to argue with success and longevity, right? That's why Remington Core-Lokt has been one of the most popular and effective deer hunting loads since 1939. It features a tapered copper jacket bonded to a solid lead core, which expands to more than twice its size upon impact. Core-Lokt is available in dozens of weights including the most popular for deer hunting, in soft point and pointed soft point versions.

MSRP: Varies

www.remington.com

Skinner Sights

Skinner Sights, long known for their rock solid dependability and accuracy, has a new line of sights for different makes and models of your favorite rifles. Skinnner Sights are machined from solid steel, stainless steel or brass bar stock, and all parts are hand-fitted to close tolerances for superior performance. These sights are slim, trim and sleek, but are rugged enough to handle daily use in some of the toughest conditions anywhere. Skinner Sights are ready when you need them.

MSRP: Varies

www.skinnersights.com



Stocky's M50 Accublock

Stocky's new M50 Accublock stock features a precision molded-in aluminum chassis for a super rigid and accurate upgrade to fit any Remington 700 rifle. The M50 Accublock stock comes complete with HIGH and X-HIGH cheek rests for the correct eye-to-scope positioning, along with just the right palm swell for proper trigger control and interchangeable forend channels to fit a wide variety of hunting, varmint and target barrels.

MSRP: $199

www.stockysstocks.com





Taurus Raging Hunter

Taurus USA adds the new .44 Magnum Raging Hunter into its expansive line of revolvers. It's a hard-hitting big-bore designed for short- to medium-range hunting scenarios. The six-shot Raging Hunter features a stainless and blue two-tone finish (also available in matte blue), optics-ready Picatinny rail and angular barrel design. The unique barrel system incorporates a steel sleeve inserted into an aluminum housing that reduces overall weight. Cushioned insert grips aid with recoil management, as does the unique placement of the factory-tuned porting and gas expansion chamber designed to disperse gases directionally. This reduces muzzle lift and delivers quicker target acquisition.

MSRP: $919

www.taurususa.com

Federal Powershok Copper 300 BLK

Federal has expanded its Power-Shok Copper line with the new 120-grain 300 Blackout load. The accurate, hollow-point copper projectile creates large wound channels for deer and other game thanks to the hollow-point design that provides consistent expansion. Designed for the popular and effective 300 Blackout, the Power-Shock Copper 300 BLK deserves a test at the range and time in the field.

MSRP: $26.95

www.federalpremium.com



Browning X-Bolt Pro

Browning is delving into semi-custom rifle production with the new X-Bolt Pro, with the Gen. 2 offering a full carbon fiber wrap stock with compressed foam core. The rifle comes with a burnt bronze Cerakote finished barrel and action and fluted bolt with enlarged bolt knob. The Cerakote finish on the action and barrel is also on the exterior of the stock for added protection. The burnt bronze hue mutes the stock color for better concealability. The barrel features a new proprietary lapping process to provide consistent accuracy and easier bore cleaning — avoiding the need for a time-consuming break-in process.

MSRP: $2,069.99

www.browning.com



Savage Rifle Model 110 Hunter Accufit

Want a custom rifle without paying the custom price? The new Savage Model 110 Hunter has the new AccuFit system with five comb risers and four length-of-pull inserts for optimal adjustability. Set the rifle for early season when you're wearing lighter clothes or winter's heavier garb, or for youth or women shooters. The rifle has a carbon-steel barrel and synthetic stock to battle the elements, along with a detachable magazine and AccuTrigger system.

MSRP: $749

www.savagearms.com



Savage MSR15 Valkyrie

You'll get premium performance and results with the Savage MSR15 Valkyrie, designed to optimize the new 224 Valkyrie cartridge from Federal Premium. The MSR15 provides supersonic velocities out to 1,300 yards with flat trajectories and match accuracy, along with half the recoil of larger cartridges often used to reach such distances. The rifle has an 18-inch barrel with 5R rifling and two-stage trigger, along with an Elite Series FDE Cerakote finish to handle whatever Mother Nature tries to throw at it. Additionally, the adjustable mid-length gas system can be customized to specific ammo for consistent cycling.

MSRP: $1,499

www.savagearms.com



Pedersoli Scout

From Dixie Gun Works the classic lines of the Pedersoli Scout 12-gauge muzzleloading shotgun is as near "all around" as you can get. Crafted with gorgeous select walnut stock and a satin finish, the Scout features a blued octagon-to-round smoothbore barrel. Flintlock or percussion ignition is available. Other features include a brass nosecap and wedgelock inlays, blued steel trigger and triggerguard and color casehardened lock and hammer.

MSRP: $675 (percussion), $699 (flintlock).

www.dixiegunworks.com



Winchester XPR Sporter

Hunters who enjoy simplicity, Winchester's new XPR Sporter rifle might be an addition to your summer wish list. This solid hunter features Grade 1 walnut, a matte blued-finished receiver and button-rifled free-floating barrel. Nickel Teflon on the bolt body helps with smoother operation and corrosion rsistance, and a steel recoil lug is inletted into the stock to prevent the receiver from twisting under recoil. There's more, too, packed into the XPR Sporter.

MSRP: $599

www.winchesterguns.com



Stocky's Carbon Fiber Stocks

Stocky's offers two new stocks for 700's, Tikka T3's, Stiller and Zermatt Bighorn rifles. These two Carbon Fiber Long Range series stocks differ only in their forend design. The Prairie Varmint has the wider beavertail forend of the two, the Alpine Hunter has the standard forend. Construction is literally the best in the industry — hand lay-ups of premium carbon fiber cloth are resin-impregnated and molded one-at-a-time by American military veterans. The inletting is carefully CNC machined like the more expensive stocks then finished in your choice of textured colors to produce some of the stiffest, most durable lightweight stocks on the market today. These new stocks are drop-ins complete with pillars, a hand-fitted Pachmayr Decelerator recoil pad with two swivel studs up front for sling/bipod use. Available in mountain, sporter, varmint and our exclusive Proof Research/M24 barrel channel inlets plus your choice of ADL, BDL or M5 detach mag system inlets. The stocks are available in many colors, textures and camo patterns.

MSRP: $549

www.stockysstocks.com





Winchester Deer Season Slug

Winchester's Deer Season series has been specifically designed for deer hunters, and for those who enjoy using slugs or must because of state regulations. The Deer Season Slug was created for 12-gauge smoothbore barrels, with a 1¼-ounce slug combined with a unique stabilizing wad that inserts through the slug. This creates a dome-shaped tip, and the pair travel downrange together for better accuracy. Upon impact they separate to provide better terminal performance.

MSRP: N/A

www.winchester.com

Hornady 300 Blackout Subsonic

Hornady's new 300 Blackout Subsonic Ammunition is specifically designed for consistent accuracy and performance below the speed of sound. The new 190-grain Sub-X bullet features a lead core with long grooves in its gilding metal jacket. This combo provides a flat profile, while the Flex Tip insert within its hollow point helps it expand reliably at low velocities.

MSRP: $22.99

www.hornady.com





SIG SAUER .300 Win Mag

SIG SAUER's new .300 Win. Mag. round joints its lineup of SIG HT premium-grade, copper hunting ammunition. The 165-grain .300 Win. Mag. features an all-copper bullet with great expansion and a muzzle velocity of 3,110 fps, along with with muzzle energy of 3,543 foot-pounds. For whitetails and other medium-size game, it's an excellent choice. SIG HT cartridges are made with premium nickel-plated shell cases. Flash-reduced propellant is used to minimize muzzle flash in low-light situations.
MSRP: $54.25
www.sigsauer.com/ammunition

Federal Premium 224 Valkyrie Ammo

The blazing-fast Federal Premium 224 Valkyrie is turning heads thanks to its long-range performance, flat trajectories and match accuracy out to 1,300 yards. Whether you're firing for the X in competition or hunting deer or other game, the 224 Valkyrie deserves a look. It's available in 90-grain Gold Medal Sierra MatchKing, 60-grain Nosler Ballistic Tip, 90-grain Fusion MSR and 75-grain American Eagle TMJ.
MSRP: $13.95 and up.
www.federalpremium.com



Browning X-Bolt Eclipse Hunter

Would you take this gorgeous rifle into the woods? You should, because looks aside the new Browning X-Bolt Eclipse Hunter will help you put more meat on the table this season. The rifle is loaded with tons of features including a laminate thumbhole stock with Monte Carlo cheekpiece, threaded-on muzzle brake, detachable rotary magazine, target crown and glass-bedded receiver. The action runs with a 60-degree bolt lift, adjustable feather trigger, detachable rotary magazine and top-tang safety. Gorgeous? Yes. But it's a hunting rifle made for the woods.
MSRP: $1,199
www.browning.com



Traditions SMACKDOWN Series

Traditions offers three new muzzleloader bullets in its SMACKDOWN lineup, — the BLEED, CARNIVORE and XR — each designed to achieve different goals. The BLEED is a 170-grain bullet with a hollow point tip that delivers terminal damage upon impact. This lighter bullet lowers recoil and increases velocities, making it perfect for maximum performance. The CARNIVORE series is available in 250-, 275-, or 305-grain bullets. The polycarbonate tip provides bullet stability and maximizes expansion. The XR series is for long-distance shooters and available in 200-, 230 or 250-grain sizes. XR also has the polycarbonate tip. These new bullets all come with Traditions new Ridgeback sabot, which has horizontal ribbing and a deeper cut for a better gas seal, easier loading and improved accuracy.
MSRP: $24.99
www.traditionsfirearms.com



Kicks BuckKicker

Designed to control buckshot loads with more consistency than ever before, BuckKicker chokes are available in three constrictions to accommodate buckshot sizes from OOO to No. 4 buck. BuckKicker chokes are manufactured from 17-4PH stainless steel and come with a black matte finish. They are available for most 10-, 12- and 20-gauge models, and can also be used for upland game whenever a full choke is required. BuckKicker chokes are not for use with steel shot. With the right match of choke to your gun, consistent patterns inside a 20-inch circle at 40 yards can be achieved. All Kick's chokes are made in the USA.
MSRP: $60
www.kicks-ind.com



OPTICS

Bushnell Trophy Xtreme



Bushnell's Trophy Xtreme binocular is designed to handle whatever you or Mother Nature throws at it while providing great views of the game you're pursuing. They're designed with a tough, armor-plate rubber coating, 3-step eyecups, and a large center-focus knob for precisise focusing whether you're wearing gloves in winter or scouting before the season begins. Quality BaK-4 porro prisms and fully multi-coated lenses offer clarity and great light transmission in any weather.

MSRP: $179 and up.

www.bushnell.com

ATN X-Sight 4K Pro

The ATN X-Sight 4K Pro with new 4K Ultra HD Sensor and Duel Core Processor technology offers processing power that delivers a more vivid picture quality, user friendly features and capabilities that sight your scope in one shot. You can get on target quickly thanks to the internal ballistic calculator, while also recording and streaming simultaneously in HD quality with WiFi Dual Stream Video. If you're live streaming on social media platforms this is perfect. The X-Sight 4K Pro series still has Recoil Activated Video capabilities. Set your video record to RAV, and get a full video of what you saw before the shot was taken, the moment of, and as much video after until you stop recording.

MSRP: $699 and up.

www.atncorp.com



Meopta MeoPro Riflescopes

Meopta's MeoPro 4.5-14x44 and 4-12x50 riflescopes continue to be favorites among the most serious whitetail hunters. Renowned for their exceptional low-light performance, these 1-inch MeoPro riflescopes feature MeoBright multi-coated lenses and SCHOTT glass for unsurpassed clarity and high contrast, allowing you to see detail from afar. Simply put, the brightness of these precision riflescopes gives you extra precious minutes of shooting time in the low light of dawn and dusk when it matters most. Available with a variety of reticles.

MSRP: $699 and up.

www.meoptasportsoptics.com/us



Sightmark LoPro Combo

Redesigned and improved for 2018, the latest LoPro Combo units from Sightmark are ideal for your tactical, home defense and hunting needs. Three revamped models ensure you'll stay on target, including the LoPro Mini Combo (SM25012), LoPro Combo Flashlight and Green Laser Sight (SM25013) and LoPro Mini (SM25016). Hinted at by their name, all LoPro accessories boast a low-profile design that allow them to be mounted in front of optics without obstructing the shooter's view. The LoPro Mini Combo features aluminum housing, protected windage/elevation adjustments, a thread-on and rotating pressure pad and variable LED brightness for flashlight modes.

MSRP: Starting at $119 and up.

www.sightmark.com





Sightmark Core HX 3-12x56 HDR

Designed to meet the demanding standards of today's hunters, the Sightmark Core HX 3-12x56 HDR Hunter Dot riflescope targets premium performance, especially in low light. This Core HX optic boasts a 56mm objective lens for enhanced light transmission, ¼-click MOA adjustments and an etched dot duplex reticle with 11 brightness settings. Built to handle heavier recoil and harsh environments, this shockproof, fogproof, IP67 waterproof riflescope features a 30mm aircraft-grade aluminum tube, fully multi-coated glass and limited lifetime warranty.

MSRP: $299

www.sightmark.com

Hawke Endurance WA

New for 2018, Hawke's Endurance WA line of scopes feature optics, chassis and reticle designs that have been explicitly engineered for big-game hunting. The wide angle optical system boasts a stunning 24 degree field of view with zero edge distortion giving you the best sight possible, while keeping an important 4-inch eye relief. Built into a 30mm chassis the wide angle optics feature either side focus or non-side focus models and exposed-locking or low-profile capped turrets. The Endurance WA line also showcases unique glass etched, illuminated ballistic reticle designs to deliver out-of-the-box accuracy with aim points to match you guns ballistics.

MSRP: $429 and up.

www.hawkeoptics.com



Bushnell Trophy

If you're looking for a quality riflescope that will last for years, take a gander at the Bushnell Trophy series. The lineup includes seven configurations including the versatile 3-9x40 and six reticle options for whatever hunting you plan to pursue. Trophy scopes have 1-piece tubes, fully multi-coated optics offering 91-percent light transmission, and 100-percent waterproof, fogproof and shockproof protection with Rainguard HD lens coating.

MSRP: Varies

www.bushnell.com



EOTech Vudu

EOTECH's new first focal plane Vudu 5-25 x 50mm riflescope includes XC high-density glass, a one-piece aluminum body and eyepiece, and EZ Chek zero stop turrets found in the first-generation Vudu scopes. This 34 mm rifle scope features a smooth locking elevation turret and capped windage turret to prevent inadvertent changes in zero, along with a parallax adjustment out to 1,100 yards to properly align the focal plane to the target. The 5-25X is one of the shortest scopes currently on the market in this magnification category and will begin shipping in July 2018. It will be available with milliradian adjustments and two reticle options that include a Mil-dot and the Horus H59.

MSRP: $2,099 and up.

www.eotechinc.com



STANDS & BLINDS

NAP Mantis



The new Mantis 2- and 3-hub blinds from New Archery Products have an innovation unlike any in recent years: a weird shape! This unique design of the large blinds isn't a mistake, though. The interior slope and design offer better concealment possibilities along with your added natural vegetation. Brush in the 38-square-foot 2-hub or 48-square-foot 3-hub blind and you'll be ready for hunting anytime of the season, even with multiple hunters.

MSRP: $199 and $299

www.newarchery.com

Summit Viper Steel

Designed on the award-winning Viper SD, the Summit Viper Steel uses steel in the construction to create a durable, long-lasting stand for year-round hunting. The Viper Steel has a brown powder-coat finish and thicker seat cushion for better comfort during long sits. The steel construction provides all the benefits of the aluminum stand but in a more economical package. Whether you're climbing in early season or late winter, the Viper Steel will be ready.

MSRP: $199.99

www.summitstands.com/viper-steel



Primos SurroundView



Hunters for years have used and appreciated the Primos Double Bull ground blind, but the new SurroundView with 360-degree camouflaged vision is turning heads. That's right, camouflaged vision. Hunters inside can see what's going on outside the blind thanks to the SurroundView band of material around the blind. But whatever's outside can't see inside, so deer, turkeys or other game seeing your form or shadows are a thing of the past. The fabric has thousands of small holes and from thge outside, the camo print and natural light force human and animal eyes to focus on the camo, making the holes invisible. On the inside, the black print and darkened interior allow your eyes to focus on the holes, so you see through the fabric.

MSRP: $499

www.primos.com

Emergency Descender



The Emergency Descender lowers a hunter automatically and hands-free immediately after a fall. Even if a hunter is unconscious or injured, the Emergency Descender can provide an automatic and gradual descent to the ground. This patented system is engineered to be rugged, compact and easy to use. It can be used with the hunter's current full-body safety harness, as long as the harness meets ASTM/TMA Standards for a fall arrest system. The weight range for users is 120 pounds up to 300 pounds.

MSRP: $50

www.primaltreestands.com

American LandMaster

American LandMaster offers hunters a complete line of utility vehicles designed to make your life easier. Every American LandMaster UTV is built from the frame up in Columbia City, Indiana. Raw tube steel is bent, welded, powder coated and assembled for every frame, and mated with low-maintenance, air-cooled engines from Vanguard or Kohler. This provides consumers a straightforward, affordable product built in the USA by an American-owned company. Additionally, every American LandMaster UTV is covered by a warranty with the best combination of coverage and duration in the industry. Accessories like winches, gun racks, camo hoods, and light bars allow the customer to maximize the vehicle for their specific use. Offering 2WD, 4WD, electric and crew units, with most well under $10,000, American LandMaster is redefining UTV value.

MSRP: Varies

www.americanlandmaster.com



Kunz Engineering

Kunz Engineering builds the heaviest duty and highest performance pull-behind mowers in the industry. Choose from either a 44-inch or 57-inch deck size with engines ranging from 19 to 27 horsepower. These mowers are designed to be easily pulled directly behind or fully offset to the side of ATVs and UTVs. The AcrEase design also features a 4-tire system, a unique twin blade design and a 2-inch to 8-inch adjustable cutting height. Optional kits are available to customize for different applications.

MSRP: Varies

www.kunzeng.com



Great Plains Mounted No-Till Drill

Properly seeded and maintained food plots provide an abundant food supply along with protective coverage for wild game. The 3P806NT from Great Plains is an 8-foot mounted no-till drill compact enough to appeal to small-acreage food plot managers, yet robust enough to tackle larger pasture seeding and reclamation projects. The 3P806NT utilizes field-proven 06 Series Openers that combine precise seed placement with rugged dependability. Choice of either 5/16-inch fluted or 5/8-inch Turbo Coulters are preloaded to 450 pounds of penetrating force per row. Opener discs are 4mm thick for maximum strength and longevity, and have a quarter-inch offset to aid in soil penetration. The standard rear lift assist wheels help carry the load while reducing the tractor's 3-point lifting demands. Multiple seed box combinations can be configured to plant up to three different types of seed simultaneously at different rates. Six-foot and 10-foot models are also available.

MSRP: Varies

www.greatplainsag.com



Brillion Till 'N Seed

The Brillion Till 'N Seed can operate under a wide variety of conditions and accurately plant a multitude of seed varieties and seed mixtures. The Till 'N Seed utilizes ground driven tillage and seed placement rotors that are self-cleaning to allow for operation in high-residue conditions. These unique features make the Till 'N Seed the ideal tool for seeding into existing turf, renovating pastures, restoring athletic fields and lawns and planting food plots.

MSRP: Call for pricing

www.landoll.com



Earthway 2750 Seeder/Spreader

The Earthway 2750 Seeder/Spreader is the ultimate tool for preparing and maintaining your remote food plots. The 2750 features a "rocking agitator" that spreads all types of seeds or granular materials evenly and quickly, with spread widths of up to 20 feet. Spread in wet or hilly areas easy and keep the seeds dry with a heavy-duty, water resistant zippered nylon bag. The 2750 will hold up to 15 pounds of seeds. The spreader includes bag supports that hold the bag open, which make filling it much easier.

MSRP: About $40

www.earthway.com



Rack One Whitetail System

Rack One Whitetail System consists of three different phases to help whitetail deer achieve maximum potential: Grow, Scout and Hunt. The Grow Phase includes the Thrive pellet and Xcellerator mineral products, which provide necessary nutrients to support antler growth 365 days a year. The Scout Phase features Amped, a premium whitetail attractant that can be used as a year-round, stand-alone product. The final phase of the system — the Hunt Phase — includes Rut Fuel, a premium whitetail attractant intensified for the hunting season.

MSRP: Varies

www.huntrackone.com



Herd Evolution Spring-Summer

Providing nutritious, digestable food year-round is a cornerstone to healthier deer, which is the basis for the Herd Evolution line of supplements. The new Spring-Summer mix is comprised of 20 percent protein blended with the highest digestible amount of nutrients and vitamins for optimal growth and health when less energy is required to survive. The Herd Evolution feed is 100-percent digestible and contains high-quality ingredients like dried molasses and cracked corn, along with protein and nutrients. For optimal results, Herd Evolution's Spring/Summer mix is best distributed through a gravity feeder. Other methods can also be used such as scattering feed in areas where deer are known to travel and bed, or using a sling feeder.

MSRP: $19.99

www.herdevolution.com





Ani Logics Mineral Dirt 180

Studies of deer across the country show that macro-minerals like calcium and phosphorus (the ones that are always the focus of discussions) are rarely deficient in white-tailed deer. But key micro-minerals such as copper, zinc, selenium and manganese, are almost always deficient in the livers and circulating blood of deer. Studies reveal that supplementation with these minerals, such as with Ani Logics' Mineral Dirt 180, has been shown to increase antler growth. Ani-Logics' use of chelated minerals, in which minerals are bound to a protein, helps increase absorption in the body by up to 70 percent. This makes these minerals more available and useful to the deer. Mineral Dirt 180 also contains Ani-Shield TX4 Technology, designed to promote whitetail deer health and antler growth.

MSRP: $20.99

www.anilogics.com

Branson Tractor 00 Series

The Branson Tractor 00 Series models offer a wide variety of features to help you care for your home and farm needs. The 00 Series tractors are available in manual or hydrostatic transmission with a fuel-efficient 24-horsepower engine. With exceptional ground clearance, the 00 Series tractors are easy to maintain and can accept many attachments including snowblowers, mid-mount mowers, loaders, backhoes and more. These tractors are perfect for wildlife food plots.

MSRP: Varies

www.bransontractor.com



Adams-Briscoe ABC Seed Mix

Since 1946, Adams-Briscoe Seed Company has recommended special "ABC" seed mixes for improvement of wildlife food and habitat, and for conservation and environmental uses. Adams-Briscoe Seed Company tries to provide customers with quality seed and related items at fair prices. We offer service that is often not available from other companies, along with product knowledge to help you in selecting the seeds to best serve your needs. We have our own wildlife seed mix formulas; however, we also offer custom blends mixed to your specifications on request.



MSRP: Prices vary.

www.abseed.com

Buck Lunch

Buck Lunch, a wildlife food plot company, has lowered prices on its entire line of sugar beet seeds. The 4-pound bag, a signature product, plants a ½ acre broadcast and 1 acre with a planter. While adding sugar beet offerings for folks with smaller food plots, from 2,750 square feet to ¼ acre, Buck Lunch has added a new line of "Breakfast Blends" along with other changes. According to Colter Kinner, Buck Lunch's new 'SeedEO,' "Being hunters, we get what it means to you, and we've rebuilt Buck Lunch with you in mind. Our focus is simple: your success! We proudly offer hunters only the best seed, and tried-and-tested food-plot designs, at competitive prices, while also providing the support they need for success."



MSRP: $39.99

www.bucklunch.com

Monroe Tufline Cultipacker

Monroe Tufline has added the DCP Series Cultipacker, designed for proper seedbed preparation and to help reduce wind and water erosion. The cultipacker helps prevent moisture loss and helps assure proper seed germination by forming a firm and level seedbed. The 16-inch cast iron notched wheels are trunnion mounted with 1⅛-inch triple-sealed ball bearings and are heavy enough to pulverize hard clods. These models come in 8-, 10-, 12-, 14- and 16-foot widths. Each size includes hydraulic lift cylinder, hydraulic hoses, tire and rim assembly, clevis-type hitch, safety chain and hydraulic cylinder transport lock out. Tufline's product lines stand up to their motto: Well Built, Performance Driven. **MSRP:** Varies by model.
www.monroetufline.com



Real World's Maximizer Deer Mineral

Real World's Maximizer Deer Mineral was developed after more than 20 years of extensive research and observation with captive whitetails as well as wild deer. Unlike other salt-dominated products, which offer very little nutritional benefit to deer, Maximizer Deer Mineral is specifically formulated with more than 20 micro- and macro-nutrients. This combination provides whitetail deer the nutritious supplement to help maintain body health and maximize their antler growth potential. Many of the macro- and micro-nutrients in Maximizer Deer Mineral are in precise proportion to each other for optimal results. These include calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, iron, cobalt and others.
MSRP: $18.99 and up.
www.realworldwildlifeproducts.com



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OTHER HUNTING ITEMS

The Slay Bag

The Slay Bag, made in the U.S.A., is a unique hunting bag made from special military grade vinyl that makes it easier to drag your deer to keep it clean and protected. The Slay Bag has a 2-inch wide adjustable pull strap that allows it to be dragged by hand or, for hands-free pulling, across your body. It has an easy-access hook-and-loop strip across the top and down the full center line for simple loading and unloading, along with buckle straps for more security. An added handle at the bottom also helps with loading. The Slay Bag rinses out easily and will lasts more than one season.



MSRP: $114.99

www.theslaybag.com

SWS Loo Eloo

Infrastructure can cost thousands of dollars. Running water lines, sewage lines, electricity, etc., takes time and money — lots and lots of money. Now there is an alternative for utilities in remote or newly-developed areas, or places where people want control of their utilities. In a remote or off-the-grid situation, those alternatives are: solar panels for electricity, rainwater harvest for water, and the Enviro Loo (Eloo) for sanitation. The scenario of the country acreage is not the only off-the-grid facility that can use the Eloo — there are many, many, other scenarios — for all kinds of situations. What about people that just want a few acres for the privacy — To escape the hassle and aggravation of our lives today? What about those that are preppers? What about artists or writers or homesteaders or anybody? SWSLoo can help you with an Eloo and the other utilities that you need to get free from some of the hassle.



MSRP: Varies

www.swsloo.com

12 Survivors Fuel Disks

Having a little trouble heating things up? Made in the U.S.A. from 100 percent recycled materials, 12 Survivors Fuel Disks will get your fire going up to 1,000°F within two minutes. Submersible and waterproof, they're guaranteed to heat up regardless of moisture, and will stay lit for 30-45 minutes or longer. With no shelf life or expiration date, the 12 Survivors Fuel Disk 3-pack is a great addition to your backpack, go-bag or emergency kit. Combine the disks with the 12 Survivors Off-Grid Survival Stove and you'll have the coffee brewing in no time. Store them together or keep 'em separated: the scoring on these discs makes it easy to split for smaller fires with a shorter duration.

MSRP: $5

www.12survivors.com



Happy Jack Flexenhance

Happy Jack Flexenhance Plus+ is a pharmaceutical grade Hyaluronan (also known as hyaluronic acid) that promotes the resilience of cartilage and its resistance to compression. In older dogs the degradation of cartilage around joints can cause arthritic symptoms. Creatine and glucosamine promote muscle repair after exercise. It also contains Brewer's yeast, which can help to repel fleas. Flexenhance Plus+ comes with 100 chewable tablets to a bottle and is available in better farm feed and hardware stores.



MSRP: $15

www.happyjackinc.com

MTN OPS Ignite Trail Packs



MTN OPS Ignite Trail Packs are a convenient way to stay energized and alert in the stand, at the range or anytime. Get the most out of your training and maximize your overall performance by fueling your mind and body. Ignite's 900mg Brain Blend includes Choline Bitartrate, Ly-Tryosine and DMAE Bitartrate to improve cognitive function, resulting in elevated mental acuteness and clarity. Additionally, using the amino acid L-Citrulline, Ignite delivers 20-plus hours release of nitric oxide providing smooth, long lasting energy as well as improved hydration, faster recovery and no jitters or crash.
MSRP: $39.95
www.mtnops.com

Decibullz's Percussive Filters

Protecting your ears from cumulative hearing loss is one of the best and easiest things you can do to also help your hunting later in life. Decibullz are non-battery operated percussive filters that allow low-level noise in but block loud noises, like gunshots. Because of the special design they're always ready without the need for any on-off switches or adjustments. Just put them in your ears and you're protected. Here's the other cool part: the earplugs, which hold the filters, are custom moldable. Just place the earplugs in warm water and then mold them to the exact shape of your ear.
MSRP: Varies
www.decibullz.com



ScentLok OZ20

Don't simply mask odors in your vehicle — destroy them. The new ScentLok OZ20 Vehicle Deodorizer provides an odor-obliterating solution for hunters and non-hunters. OZ Active Odor-Destroyers by ScentLok are designed to reactivate activated carbon garments and deodorize other gear and accessories, while also keeping the environments around hunters and their gear as odor-free as possible. The OZ20 works with a 12-volt plug and has an 8-hour treatment cycle.
MSRP: $39.95
www.scentlok.com



Happy Jack Tonekote

Happy Jack Tonekote is liquid food supplement for dogs and puppies to improve dry skin, dull coat and reduce excessive shedding. These symptoms could indicate that your dog needs more essential fatty acids and vitamins that promote healthy skin and lustrous coat. Your dog's body can't make these key nutrients, so it's important they're included in his diet. Tonekote is a food supplement rich in Linoleic Acid, an essential fatty acid. Tonekote also provides Vitamins A, D and E, all vital ingredients for healthy skin and coat. Simply add Tonekote to your dog's food.
MSRP: $15
www.happyjackinc.com



Thermacell Radius

Early season hunts may include mosquitoes that can be disruptive, and the last thing you want to do is be wiggling or swatting at anything. ThermaCell's Radius Zone is rechargeable, scent-free, compact, powerful, and operates with a single refill component. Powered by a long-lasting Lithium-Ion battery, Radius creates a 110-square-foot mosquito-protection zone. Use it on your stand or in the blind to keep skeeters away so you can focus on whitetails.
MSRP: $39.95
www.thermacell.com



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QUAIL HUNTS

by Bob Robb

THOSE FASCINATING ANTLERS

Today's deer hunter is not unlike his ancestors in many ways. Though the technology and needs have certainly changed, we still hunt to feed our families and answer a primal urge. And like primeval man, we are enamored by antlers.

You can see this fascination by looking at the etchings and paintings on cave walls the world over, where ancient hunters created their own trophy room long before the art of taxidermy was perfected. They also used antlers (and horns) in a practical way, making everything from tools, weapons and ceremonial garb from them. Antlers were often featured prominently in ceremonial dances to celebrate the prowess of the tribe's best hunters.

Modern hunters are so infatuated with antlers that they spend inordinate amounts of time and money helping deer grow them. Food plots, mineral licks, protein supplements, habitat manipulation and management — many think about it 24/7/365. In spring and summer we watch antlers grow, and that begets questions: How do they grow? What are they made out of? What is this furry velvet we see early in their development, and why does it go away?

Antlers are one of the fastest growing tissues in all of nature. The process for whitetails is regulated by hormones controlled by the photoperiod, or length of day. The primary hormones responsible for antler growth are testosterone and IGF (insulin like growth factor). Biologically, fluctuating testosterone levels initiate the peeling off of the velvet and the casting off of the antlers, while IGF that is produced in the liver promotes actual antler growth. As the days grow longer from winter to spring to summer, a corresponding drop in melatonin production kick-starts the hormone cycle for antler growth. Without diving into too much biology, basically a buck's brain measures the length of day by the amount of melatonin produced. In turn this influences testosterone and IGF levels. This is why the bucks that are late in the velvet shedding process are usually yearling bucks and older bucks past their prime — they have lower levels of testosterone than prime-of-life bucks.

Antler growth begins with the pedicel, located on the frontal portion of the skull and which is the base from where antlers form. "Buttons" begin to grow from the pedicels when bucks are about six months old. During the spring and summer growing season the antlers are covered in a very fine, soft membrane we call velvet. Underneath this furry membrane, a rich supply of blood and nutrients flows through veins running on the outside of the antlers and back down to the base. During the growing stages, antlers are high in water and blood content and low in dry matter. The dry matter at this stage is around 80 percent protein and 20 percent phosphorous and calcium. Once hardened, antlers are about 60 percent phosphorous and calcium and 40 percent protein.

> "Modern hunters are so infatuated with antlers that they spend inordinate amounts of time and money helping deer grow them."

When in velvet, antlers are very vulnerable. Bucks are intuitively aware of this and are very careful during the growth process, one reason it's common to see bucks out in the open when they are in velvet. Injuries to the velvet can result in abnormal points or, at times, complete deformation. As a side note, leg and pedicel injuries can also lead to deformed antlers. Injuries on the rear legs affect the opposite side antler, where front leg or shoulder injuries will affect the same side. Research shows this oddity may be from the buck's ability to pull or redirect nutrients for healing the injured leg. Also, injuries to the pedicel can happen from buck fights during the rut, which can cause part of the pedicel to shed with the antler. If these injuries are bad enough, they can sometimes affect antler growth for several years.

Following the summer solstice (June 21 in 2018), days start getting shorter and the testosterone levels in bucks begin to rise. This slows the antler growth cycle, which begins the process of hardening of the antlers. Bucks now grow what we call the "burr" at the base of the antler. The burr cuts off the blood supply to the velvet. In less than a day the drying velvet is rubbed off on trees and bushes, leaving the buck with a blood-stained rack he will continue to polish for several days.

Rarely does a buck not shed his antlers, instead keeping velvet-covered antlers that continually grow throughout the year. This is known as cryptorchidism, and these bucks are often called "cactus bucks." Cryptorchidism is the result of an injury or castration of the testes which alters testosterone levels. The age at which the injury occurs will determine the severity of antler deformation or interruption in the normal antler cycle. An older buck that has a testes injury or castration while in hard antler will likely shed its antlers early due to the sharp decrease in testosterone production. The following season the buck may grow a rack that is permanent and stays velvet-covered and growing.

For most of us, deer hunting is a way to reconnect with Mother Nature, a time to escape the pressures of the go-go world in which we live while providing the finest organic protein on earth to our families. Yet, like ancient man, the modern deer hunter also reveres exceptional antlers. Because they are rare, they take our breath away and leave us in awe. And so, like our ancestors, we dance.

Do you have a unique antler story you'd like to share? Drop me a note, *bob.robb@grandviewoutdoors.com*, I'd love to hear from you!

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- C. Funnell

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