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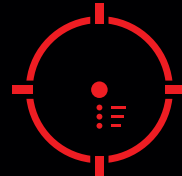
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Searching Out Ascendant Markets

Classic phrases like “the market is what you make of it” are especially true here in the first half of 2025. Several forces are acting against us — rising commodity prices, uncertainty in how tariffs will impact trade, a “relaxed” sales environment that has created a buyer’s market and more.

However, there are opportunities available for resourceful dealers to capitalize on this year. Inside this issue, two prominent subcategories come into focus: suppressor sales and varmint/predator hunting.

SUPPRESSORS: A “BOOM” MARKET

Referenced in other issues, suppressor booths at SHOT Show 2025 were swarming with interest. In this month’s *Best Practices* installment, Tim Barker speaks with suppressor manufacturers and dealers alike about what’s behind the sudden surge in suppressor sales.

“Everyone’s talking about suppressors. Everyone’s got them,” observed Mark Gore, co-owner of Black Wing Shooting Center in Delaware, Ohio. “Now the ball is rolling and there’s a lot more people jumping on board.”

Shorter wait times for tax stamps is one reason for growth, but also the industry’s education efforts have resonated with consumers: shooting with a suppressor enhances comfort and the user experience at the range or while hunting.

For more insights, see **p. 22**.

PREDATOR & VARMINT SALES

In “Hunting The Hunters” (**pp. 28–31**), Nancy Keaton posits the predator and varmint market represents an opportunity for dealers to accomplish two things: boost the bottom line, while also supporting their local wildlife ecosystems. It’s no secret coyotes and feral hogs can quickly wreak havoc on livestock and crops, and your store has the ability to furnish the needs of



MAY 2025

hunters to cull those populations.

“Coyotes can do a lot of damage, especially to turkey nests. Habitat management and conservation is a big push right now,” noted Kelley Powers, founding owner of Final Flight Outdoors in Union City, Tenn.

Surprise, surprise: the rise of suppressors are also enhancing the popularity of this segment.

“Suppressors are not only great for hearing protection, but you can sometimes get off a second shot. Even though it’s obviously not ‘silent,’ you are a little more undetected,” Powers contended.

A “BEAR MARKET” FOR AMMUNITION?

Bryan Hendricks polls executives from Hodgdon Powder Co. and Fiocchi to glean important insights on the ammunition and reloading segment. Even though there is some familiarity in how President Donald Trump engages with the firearms industry, global events are causing increased strain on availability.

“It’s a little bit of a puzzle still. Trump 2.0 is very different than Trump 1.0,” said Aaron Oelger, Hodgdon VP of marketing. “I’m not sure what to expect for this year, but with demand slumping a little bit, that’s probably not where we want be from a supply perspective, but I still think product will still be available.”

See **p. 24** for more.

*Editor’s Note: Next month’s issue will highlight safety sales, home-defense long guns, new tech in self-defense and more. **SI***

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REPORT FROM BEHIND THE COUNTER: WOMEN ARE BUYING!

Editor's Note: The following is a response to Jim Curcuruto's "Sending A Strong & Clear Message" feature that appeared in the Feb. 2025 issue. In this powerful article, Curcuruto suggests how the industry can improve cultural acceptance of gun ownership, hunting and target shooting among the general population. It can be found online here: <https://shootingindustry.com/discover/sending-a-clear-strong-message>.

We invite additional feedback!
editor@shootingindustry.com

I work part-time as a firearms sales associate at a big-box retailer in Southeast Texas. I'm also a member of the Indian-American Rifle Club, an organization I joined to help encourage immigrants from India to take up shooting and hunting and to vote pro-gun. I am also an immigrant from a country where gun ownership was encouraged when I was a boy but later came to be wiped out by successive authoritarian governments.

During the past eight months I have been selling guns, I have noticed some trends that likely spread across the U.S. — the overwhelming majority of handguns

are bought by women. When it comes to hunting though, the trend is completely reversed.

In Texas, women are targeted by criminals for both carjackings and violent theft. The bad guys usually like to focus on young mothers with children because their natural instinct is to grab their children and ignore their property. The other target is older women who might go somewhere alone — they are considered wealthy and incapable of defending themselves.

At our store, a lot of parents are bringing their daughters in to get me to convince them to buy guns. (Husbands and boyfriends do the same thing.) Many women are nervous about buying guns and at the range, they're usually difficult to get started shooting.

That said, however, once they get into the spirit of it, women are far more enthusiastic than men. This is a good thing, as a mother who likes guns, shoots and possibly hunts, will always teach her children discipline, safe firearms operation and more to keep the Second Amendment alive.

I agree with the point about making firearms easier to operate — the Smith & Wesson EZ semi-autos are popular because the slides are very easy to rack. The .380-caliber is especially popular because of its light recoil and its effectiveness

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without sacrificing too much at the 20' and under ranges that most encounters might take place.

An especially popular semi-auto — even though it is relatively large — is the Ruger Security-380 because of its especially light slide and the superb reliability that comes with it.

Wealthier women have been buying the SIG SAUER P365 ROSE, as they like the grip and the compensator that helps reduce flip and recoil. That said, I have found even younger women can easily shoot my little GLOCK 43X even with heavy loads without difficulty.

We sell handbags with carry pouches inside for women's handguns, but I usually

HAVE A THOUGHT WHILE READING THE ISSUE?

Let us know at comments@shootingindustry.com, facebook.com/shootingindustry or linkedin.com/company/fmg-publications

try to talk my customers out of buying these because a snatched handbag would result in belongings and a gun lost to a criminal.

There are certain things that would help increase comfort for women gun owners and these are a few random suggestions:

1. More compact, easy-to-operate handguns — the Smith & Wesson BODYGUARD 2.0 is beautifully proportioned, but its slide is too tight to rack compared to say, the Ruger Security-380.
2. Carry holsters that are designed for women and, possibly, by women. As a man, I have suggestions to offer, of course. I'm a father to daughters. But I do think holsters and carry options designed for women's bodies by women would be a much better option.
3. I know there are hunting rifles

and shotguns designed for women, but by whom? The women hunters whom I have sold guns to (in small numbers compared to the huge number of women handgun buyers) prefer bolt actions or occasionally AR-15s in 5.56, .350 Legend or similar. Others like bolt guns in .243 and other soft-kicking calibers; the 6.5 Creedmoor was popular until ranches started banning it for hunting for some reason.

Thank you and I always enjoy reading your magazine. I came to work part-time in this industry after working in the technology licensing industry because I love guns and shooting and hunting. Your magazine always helps with new ideas I use while assisting customers. Hopefully, my thoughts will resonate in a small way. **SI**

— **Mehul Kamdar, Sales Associate**
Big-Box Retailer In Southeast Texas

Mehul, first of all — thank you for reading *Shooting Industry*. I've shared your glowing words with our team. Our industry needs more associates with your level of insight!

Your observations on women buying firearms mirror what other dealers have said, as well as NSSF and other leading industry research groups. Over the past few years, we've heard stories from dealers who have shared that when a mom gets involved in the shooting sports, her whole family generally follows suit. They certainly bring buying power!

To answer your third point: Savage Arms and Weatherby offer rifles tailored for women, while Syren USA's entire line of sporting shotguns are designed for women.

— **Jade Moldae, SI Editor**



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HENRY, BARRETT ANNOUNCE MAJOR EXPANSIONS

By Jade Moldae

Just as March Madness was beginning to heat up, two prominent U.S. firearms manufacturers announced significant “bracket busting” moves to solidify their futures within days of each other.

Iconic lever-action rifle producer Henry Repeating Arms and large-caliber rifle leader Barrett Firearms Mfg. will each have expansive new headquarters to set the stage for future growth. The timing is worth noting,

even as the market grapples with uncertainty in the short-term, these companies have elected to invest now to further their ambitions in the U.S. firearms landscape.

HENRY’S FUTURE IS IN WISCONSIN

March 18, Henry announced it would be “planting its flag firmly” in Wisconsin — committing 100% of its manufacturing operations in

Henry’s future is firmly in Wisconsin. By mid-summer, there will be three Ladysmith, Wis., facilities supporting Henry’s expansive state-of-the-art headquarters in nearby Rice Lake.

the Badger State — after nearly two decades of maintaining operations in New Jersey and Wisconsin.

The commitment includes transferring all of its Bayonne, N.J. manufacturing operations to its newly expanded state-of-the-art headquarters in Rice Lake, Wis., and two additional facilities in nearby Ladysmith, Wis. The company is also closing on a third Ladysmith facility in mid-summer 2025.

Founded in 1997 by Anthony Imperato, the company’s first Henry Repeating Arms model H001 Classic Lever Action .22 rifles shipped from a small factory in Brooklyn, N.Y. Business expanded to Wisconsin in 2006, when Imperato purchased certain assets of Wright Products (a key Henry supplier) in Rice Lake, which included a 140,000 sq. ft. building. In 2008, Henry relocated from Brooklyn to Bayonne, where it maintained operations until this announcement.

“We are putting all of our eggs in one basket, the Wisconsin basket, because it makes us more efficient, more productive and allows for more collaboration amongst our design and

Continued on p. 11

FN AWARDED DEFENSE LOGISTICS AGENCY CONTRACT

FN America was recently awarded a firm-fixed-price IDIQ contract, valued up to \$39,643,953, to supply the U.S. Department of Defense’s (DoD) Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) Land and Maritime with barrels for M240 and M249 machine guns.

Mark Cherpes, president and CEO for FN America, said, “We’re incredibly honored to support the U.S. military with the highest-quality cold hammer-forged barrels. The durability and

accuracy of FN barrels provides our servicemen and women with the most effective and highest performing products available.”

FN collaborates with and is a key partner of DLA Land and Maritime, a combat support agency within the U.S. DoD and one of the largest suppliers of spare parts that support land-based and maritime weapon systems. DLA Land and Maritime serves over 20,000 customers throughout all U.S. military branches, civil agencies and other DoD organizations.

The M240 general-purpose machine gun, derived from the FN MAG 58, was adopted by the U.S. military in the late 1970s, and has been in continual



FN America M240L

service since being introduced. FN has created multiple variants of the M240, including the M240 coaxial, the M240B, M240L, M240D and M240H models.

The FN M249 has been a mainstay throughout the U.S. military since 1986 and is currently in service in more than 30 countries.

[/fnamerica.com](http://fnamerica.com)

Continued from p. 10

engineering teams, all while sustaining and enhancing Henry's solid reputation for quality," said Imperato, who serves as Henry CEO. "With about 400,000 sq. ft. of cutting-edge manufacturing operations in four facilities within minutes of each other, Henry Repeating Arms is well positioned for its next chapter."

Henry President Andrew Wickstrom, who was the director of operations at Wright Products when it was acquired by Henry in 2006 and served as Henry general manager until being promoted to president in 2021, stated the move will position the company for future growth.

"This transition allows us to double down on what we do best — making world-class rifles, shotguns and revolvers right here in the heart of America," he said. "Our Wisconsin operations have been essential to our success for a long time, and now it is the cornerstone of our bright future."

Duane Hammaker, co-owner of Guns Plus (a Top 100 Henry Dealer) in Duncannon, Pa., shared how this consolidation will benefit dealers and end users alike.

"The recent press release from Henry Repeating Arms to centralize production of Henry rifles, shotguns and revolvers in Wisconsin is exciting news," he said. "We anticipate the already award-winning products and the service Henry is known for to be enhanced, with increased efficiency and communications."

The company has made significant enhancements to its new headquarters, adding dedicated engineering rooms, corporate offices and more than 100 CNC machines to further elevate volume and efficiency. Moving forward, each Henry will be marked with "Rice Lake, Wis." on the barrel.

[/ henryusa.com](http://henryusa.com)

BARRETT TO DEVELOP CAMPUS-STYLE COMPLEX IN TENNESSEE

March 20, just two days after Henry's announcement, Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee, Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development Commissioner Stuart C. McWhorter and Barrett Firearms publicized plans for a new-state-of-the-



An artist's rendering of Stage 1 of the planned BMTC in Murfreesboro, Tenn. Stage 1 will have a total floor area of 250,000 sq. ft., housing numerous departments critical to Barrett's further growth.

art facility opening less than a mile from Barrett's current base of operations in Murfreesboro, Tenn.



The BMTC will serve as our primary firearms manufacturing site globally and demonstrates our commitment as a major American manufacturer catering to both the commercial and military markets."

Rob Nioa • CEO
NIOA Group

The \$76.4 million campus-style industrial precinct — dubbed the Barrett Manufacturing & Technology Campus (BMTC) — will house capabilities for "designing, developing, manufacturing, testing, sustaining and distributing Barrett's expanding range of world-class products," according to a company press release.

Scheduled to open early 2027, the BMTC will be constructed on a 170-acre greenfield site and double the Barrett workforce over the next five years. The campus-style environment will integrate

the company's corporate headquarters, R&D capabilities, manufacturing, secure warehouse and a logistics hub.

"We thank the Department of Tennessee Economic and Community Development for their vision and for their shared enthusiasm in this growth opportunity in our State," said Barrett CEO Bryan James. "This is a significant investment in growing Barrett's capabilities for the future while underscoring our long-term commitment to the company's Murfreesboro, Tennessee heartland."

Rob Nioa, CEO of Barrett Firearms' parent company NIOA Group, said: "The BMTC will serve as our primary firearms manufacturing site globally and demonstrates our commitment as a major American manufacturer catering to both the commercial and military markets."

Stage 1 of the BMTC, with a total floor area of around 250,000 sq. ft., features an on-site cafeteria, multi-use auditorium, conference and training rooms, outdoor meeting areas and R&D facilities including state-of-the-art testing ranges and laboratory space.

Barrett Firearms was founded in Murfreesboro in 1982, and was family-owned until it was acquired in 2023 by NIOA, a global firearms, weapons and munitions company headquartered in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia.

[/ barrett.net](http://barrett.net)

OUTDOOR STEWARDS' "KEEPERS OF THE WILD" PSA HITS MILESTONE

The Outdoor Stewards of Conservation Foundation (OSCF) is celebrating a significant milestone with its "Keepers of the Wild" public service announcement (PSA). Since its launch in September 2024, the PSA has generated more than \$5 million in donated media value and reached over 225 million impressions across the general population.

As overall acceptance of activities such as hunting and target shooting continues to decline, it is imperative for those involved in the outdoor space to expand their communication efforts.

Gun owners, hunters, target shooters and the firearms industry contribute significantly to the betterment of society. From addressing food insecurity by donating millions of meals worth of game meat to being primary funders of wildlife conservation, their impact is substantial and often never realized by the general population.

The "Keepers of the Wild" campaign from OSCF is the largest national PSA initiative to improve cultural acceptance of gun ownership, hunting and target shooting among the general population.

The 60-second PSA features double-exposure visuals depicting landscapes across the country and narration that educates viewers on how hunters, target



shooters and the firearms industry have been primary funders of wildlife conservation for over 80 years.

The OSCF continues to work with project partners to distribute "Keepers of the Wild" to a network of 11,000 radio and television stations nationwide. The initial response has been overwhelmingly positive, with the PSA being picked up by stations nationwide. The campaign has exceeded projections and is reaching a massive audience. With this success, OSCF is now beginning to develop additional PSAs.

"With a constant barrage of negative messages about firearms, hunting and target shooting making their way to the general population, it is more important than ever to fight back with our own messages to change the narrative," said Tim Brandt, president of the Murray Road Agency and Outdoor Stewards board

member. "We have additional projects and plans in the works to significantly increase efforts in this area in 2026 and beyond. With the support of the outdoor industry, there is little doubt we can win back cultural acceptance of gun ownership, hunting and target shooting among the general population."

The OSCF encourages organizations connected to firearms, hunting or target shooting to promote the PSA through their newsletters, social media and website postings. They may contact OSCF's executive director Jim Curcuruto (203) 450-7202 to discuss efforts to improve cultural acceptance.

Outdoor Stewards of Conservation Foundation (OSCF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that works with all facets of the outdoor industry.

[/ outdoorstewards.org](https://outdoorstewards.org)

SK ANNOUNCES 2025 FUNDRAISING SUCCESS TO DATE

SK Guns recently contributed to fundraisers held by the National Police Bloodhound Association (NPBA) and MidwayUSA Foundation through its SK Gives Back program. The philanthropic branch of SK Guns raised over \$7,000 for NPBA and assisted MidwayUSA Foundation toward its \$560,000 total through a special raffle for those donating \$1,000 or more.

The company remains dedicated to supporting local and national 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations invested in the

betterment of the firearms community.

Following its relocation to St. Augustine, Fla., SK Guns partnered with the St. John's County Sheriff's Office and its Bloodhound K9 Division. SK's involvement in the event, through offering a number of raffle items, contributed to doubling the donations typically received at an NPBA seminar.

"SK Gives Back has started 2025 with a wealth of success in supporting partners new and old. We are thrilled to introduce our partnership with the local sheriff's department in our new home," said Simon Khiabani, owner and founder of SK Guns.

The funds SK Gives Back raised for MidwayUSA Foundation were raised



during the organization's fund-matching Giving Tuesday fundraiser prior to the new year. Supporters received a raffle ticket for a chance to win SK Gun's Italian Renaissance Gold Series for every donation of \$1,000 to the foundation.

[/ skguns.com/sk-gives-back](https://skguns.com/sk-gives-back)

BENELLI NAMES TOP 2024 SALES REPRESENTATIVES

Benelli USA announced the recipients of its 2024 Sales Representative of the Year awards. The awards annually recognize sales reps from across the country for exceptional sales performance and customer service on behalf of the Benelli USA family of brands. Benelli USA's VP of Sales, Lee Colquitt, presented the awards at the 2025 SHOT Show in Las Vegas.

Core Line Marketing was named the Benelli USA Agency of the Year for surpassing sales goals by the highest percentage above budget in the 2024 fiscal year. The top individual sales award went to Ken Worthington of Core Line Marketing.

Other top performers recognized were Robby Hale, Core Line Marketing — Uberti Rep of the Year; Mike Williams, Vincent A. Pestilli & Associates Inc. — Stoeger Firearms Rep of the Year; Nate Anderson, Bentley-Scott Marketing —



Benelli USA honored Core Line Marketing as its 2024 Agency of the Year during SHOT Show 2025.

Franchi Rep of the Year; Mike Pestilli, Vincent A. Pestilli & Associates Inc. — Benelli Rep of the Year; and Greg Rader, Covey Sales & Marketing — Benelli USA Rep of the Year.

Additionally, Patrick Boccabello of Vincent A. Pestilli & Associates Inc. was named L.E. Rep of the Year. Greg Rader of Covey Sales & Marketing received the National Account Rep of the Year award. Brian Murray of Owen J. Brown & Assoc. received the Communication award. James Little of Core Line Marketing was named Independent Account Rep of the Year.

The leading reps have consistently met or exceeded sales goals, exhibited exceptional commitment to servicing their customers' needs and furthered

relationships and business development to achieve growth and to ensure the overall success of the Benelli, Franchi, Stoeger and Uberti USA brands.

"Our dedicated and hardworking representatives are the backbone of our sales efforts," said Colquitt. "Their long hours on the road, on the show floors and on the phone to ensure our customers are treated with personal and professional service is key to our company's success. It is always a pleasure when our representatives come in from the field and we have a chance to gather and acknowledge their outstanding work, and we look forward to another productive year for our sales team and our customers in 2025."

[/ benelliusa.com](https://benelliusa.com)

"PARTNER WITH A PAYER" VIDEO FOCUSES ON TEAMWORK

The NSSF, in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) and Beretta USA, announced the release of the latest installment in the "Partner with a Payer" video series.

This latest video offers a new behind-the-scenes look at how Pittman-Robertson federal excise tax dollars — generated by firearm, ammunition and archery manufacturers — directly fund conservation, habitat restoration and public access to hunting and shooting opportunities.

As part of this initiative, representatives from USFWS and TWRA visited Beretta USA's manufacturing facility in Tennessee to see firsthand how the federal excise taxes paid by manufacturers contribute to conservation. These funds, paired with hunting and fishing licenses funds from hunters and anglers, provide vital support for state-led wildlife restoration efforts, helping to protect and enhance populations of



David Armistead, Beretta USA manufacturing manager, interacts with a rep from the USFWS during a visit to Beretta USA's Gallatin, Tenn., facility.

species like elk, deer, turkey and bear.

"Wildlife restoration dollars are so important to our agency. They touch just about every project that we have on the ground. We're so incredibly grateful for our hunters and anglers who contribute to the funding model, as well as the federal excise taxes that come from manufacturers that really make what we do possible," said Emily Buck, director of communications and outreach at TWRA.

Pittman-Robertson funding is one of the most successful conservation models in history, ensuring that those who

participate in hunting and shooting sports directly contribute to wildlife restoration. Beretta USA, a company that has been in business for nearly 500 years, is one of many manufacturers that play a key role in this funding model.

"Knowing that those dollars go to the creation of habitat, to the education of target shooters and to the education of hunters as they become new hunters is extremely important to me," said Ted Caldwell, VP of supply chain and manufacturing operations at Beretta USA.

[/ nssf.org](https://nssf.org)

TEXAS SENATE HONORS A GIRL & A GUN

The Texas Senate honored A Girl & A Gun (AG & AG) on the 14th anniversary of its first Girls Night Out, held on Feb. 28, 2011. A resolution signed by Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick and State Sen. Brian Birdwell recognized the organization's profound impact of inspiring women through firearms education, competition and community.

The resolution states, "The Senate of the State of Texas, 89th Legislature, hereby commends A Girl & A Gun for their commitment to empowering women and promoting firearms safety and proficiency, and extend to all best wishes for continued success."

Robyn Sandoval, AG & AG president and CEO, accepted the resolution on behalf of the organization, alongside many members of the club attending the event in the Texas Capitol rotunda.

The inaugural Girls Night Out in 2011, hosted by Julianna Crowder, ignited a movement that would grow into the most influential program for women in the firearms community.

Since that first event, AG & AG has



Flanked by AG & AG members, Robyn Sandoval and Julianna Crowder (right) hold the resolution honoring AG & AG in the Texas Capitol rotunda.

grown into a nationwide network, inspiring thousands of women to take ownership of their personal safety, learn new skills and discover the strength that comes from being part of a supportive and dynamic community.

"What began as Julianna's vision to welcome women to the range has grown into something much greater. We have seen women transform before our eyes — finding confidence, building lifelong

friendships and investing in themselves to protect and defend their families. This anniversary is not just a celebration of our past, but a reminder of the limitless possibilities ahead as we continue to grow and inspire," said Sandoval.

With members in all 50 states, AG & AG hosts recurring Girl's Nights Out at hundreds of ranges throughout the U.S.

[/agirlandagun.org](http://agirlandagun.org)

RUGER EXPANDS SUPPORT OF MIDWAYUSA FOUNDATION

Ruger Firearms announced significant new efforts to support MidwayUSA Foundation and promote the future of shooting sports.

From September to December 2024, Ruger hosted 17 auctions on GunBroker.com. The proceeds from these auctions totaled \$25,000, benefiting MidwayUSA Foundation's mission to sustain and grow youth shooting sports by providing long-term funding to youth shooting teams. Every dollar raised from these auctions will directly support youth shooting sports.

"These funds will help continue the Foundation's efforts to support youth shooting sports programs that provide the critical safety and firearms training that focuses on developing our next generation's shooting sports enthusiasts," said Ruger PR Manager Paul Pluff.

MidwayUSA Foundation funds approximately 2,600 youth shooting teams through earmarked endowments. Each year, a team can receive a 5% cash grant from its endowment balance to cover expenses that include ammo, targets, safety equipment and travel expenses.

"Once again, Ruger has set the example by directly supporting youth in shooting sports. Their generosity to ensure America's youth have the opportunity and funds to participate in the shooting sport of their choice is appreciated and impactful. We can't thank Ruger enough for their partnership and support of our mission," said G. Scott Reynolds, MidwayUSA Foundation's executive director.

MidwayUSA Foundation also offers range development grants that allow existing ranges to make expansions or improvements that enhance youth shooting activities. This year's grant cycle closed on April 1.



Other companies interested in supporting MidwayUSA Foundation through sponsorship may contact John Linquist, the foundation's relationship manager, by calling (573) 219-7688 or by email: jlinquist@midwayusafoundation.org.

The MidwayUSA Foundation is a 501(c)(3) public charity that supports all shooting disciplines.

[/ruger.com](http://ruger.com)

[/midwayusafoundation.org](http://midwayusafoundation.org)

NEW PARTNERSHIPS

DISTRIBUTION

RETAY USA's full line of shotguns is now available through **Lipseys**. "[Lipseys'] extensive dealer network and commitment to innovation will help bring RETAY's world-class shotguns to a broader audience. We're excited to collaborate with such a respected leader in the industry," said Christian Handy, CEO of **Banshee Brands Inc.** (RETAY USA's parent company).

Zanders announced the continued expansion of its product offerings with the addition of **Geissele**, **Lantac**, **XTech Tactical**, **Olight**, **Thompson Center**, **Winchester Optics**, **Armasight Thermal**, **Rix Thermal** and **Tyrant CNC**.

Powder Valley Outdoors announced the additions of **GPS Tactical's** high-quality backpacks and gear storage, **LitezAll's** high-performance lighting and **MTM Case-Gard's** storage solutions to its growing lineup.

Chattanooga Shooting Supplies is now carrying a selection of **Taylor's & Company's** lever-action rifles and exclusive single-action revolvers.

Maxim Defense has partnered with **MGE Wholesale** for distribution of its firearms, suppressors and accessories.

Kinsey's Inc. is now distributing **Dead Air Silencers'** suppressors and accessories. "Adding a suppressor category to our ever-evolving product assortment is an exciting and new way for us to service our dealers," said Alex Cameron, director of purchasing for Kinsey's.

Mantis is now the exclusive importer of **HTI.CENTER** rifles from Italy.

SALES REPRESENTATION

Banshee Brands Inc., the parent company of **RETAY USA** and **Breda America Group** expanded its sales team with the addition of several new representative groups: **Mountain States Sports Marketing**, serving WA, OR, CA, NV, ID, MT, WY, CO, NM, AZ, UT,



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AK, HI; **Proactive Sales Group Mid-West**, serving MO, IA, NE, KS, IL, WI, MN, ND, SD; **Proactive Sales Group North East**, serving ME, NH, VT, NY, MA, CT, RI, PA, OH, MI, IN, DE, NJ; **Jeff Robles and Associates**, serving TX, LA, OK, AR.

These new partners join **Professional Marketing Inc.**, which continues to represent Banshee Brands across the Southeast.

Otis Technology entered a new partnership with **Covey Sales & Marketing**, providing Otis and **Shooter's Choice** with additional sales support in the central U.S. Additionally, a new partnership with **Rock Outdoors LLC** will provide Otis and **Shooter's choice** support in the northeast.

Sierra Bullets' and **Barnes Bullets'** partnership with **H&G Outdoors** aims to enhance the reach and visibility of its premium products. H&G Outdoors' VP Mike Harsany said, "We are beyond excited to be partnering with Sierra and Barnes as their sales force in the east and central portions of the U.S. We feel with our dedication to the shooting sports industry and our long-standing relationships, we can increase their brands' footprint and market share."

Fiochi Ammunition entered a new partnership with **Murski-Breeding Sales** for sales representation of Fiochi and Baschieri & Pellagri products. The partnership is set to bolster Fiochi's position as a trusted name


in ammunition while expanding the reach of its premium Baschieri & Pellagri line.

Eylar, manufacturer of high-quality protective cases for firearms, optics and outdoor gear, has partnered with **Outtech** for sales and marketing representation. Outtech will leverage its extensive sales network and marketing expertise to drive growth and awareness for Eylar cases across multiple retail channels.

PR/MARKETING

Christensen Arms announced a partnership with **Dangersoup** for public and media relations. Dangersoup will craft compelling narratives and secure high-impact media opportunities to spotlight Christensen Arms' cutting-edge firearms and technology.

Swanson Russell was selected as the marketing agency of record for **Rossi** and **Heritage** to expand the brands' reach and engagement with core audiences. Patrick Finnegan, EVP/group account director at Swanson Russell, said, "We're excited to put our expertise to work in new and exciting ways for these incredible brands."

To further expand its reach to new audiences in both government and civilian markets, **Laser Ammo** selected **Murray Road Agency** to serve as its all-encompassing marketing partner. 



B. ROPER

Shadow Systems Names CRO

Brandon Roper has joined Shadow Systems as the company's chief revenue officer. In this role, Roper will lead all sales and marketing efforts.

Trevor Roe, CEO of Shadow Systems, said, "Brandon is a proven leader in the firearms industry who will be an integral part of the growth plan for the upcoming year."

Roper brings nearly two decades of leadership experience in sales, marketing and revenue growth within the firearms industry. Most recently, he served as president and CEO of Camfour Inc. He also held key leadership roles at Smith & Wesson, Vista Outdoor, Nightforce Optics and Remington Outdoor Company.



C. DIEFENBACH

Savage Arms Strengthens Leadership Team

Savage Arms announced key promotions as part of its ongoing commitment to growth and excellence. Casey Diefenbach is now serving as the senior director of sales

and Trisha Barkyoub is the new director of international business.

Diefenbach will expand his leadership responsibilities into additional channels including distribution and buy group networks, and he will continue to streamline communication within the organization. He joined Savage in 2022 as the director of retail sales after nearly a decade of financial planning and buying experience at Bass Pro/Cabela's.

With nearly two decades of experience at Savage, Barkyoub will manage ATF regulatory compliance and licenses, all

imported and exported sales, imported products, licensing and international compliance regulations as well as international sales, including Canada and global sales support.

"These promotions are a testament to the outstanding leadership and expertise demonstrated by our team members," said Chris Bezzina, CEO and president of Savage Arms and Bowtech Archery Group.



C. PATRICK

Smith & Wesson Brands Inc. Names Sales VP

Smith & Wesson Brands Inc. announced the promotion of Chad Patrick to VP of sales.

"Throughout his career, Chad has worked closely with every customer segment and has earned an outstanding reputation for his dedication to Smith & Wesson, his deep knowledge of the firearms industry and his passion for shooting sports and the outdoors," said Mark Smith, S&W president and CEO.

Patrick has been a member of the Smith & Wesson sales team for nearly 19 years. He joined the company as a district sales manager in 2007, then promoted to national accounts manager in 2012 and was promoted again in 2016 to national sales director.



J. BALTZEGAR

Daniel Defense Appoints COO

Daniel Defense appointed James Baltzegar as its COO. He will play a critical role in enhancing operations, strengthening supply chain capabilities and ensuring top-tier quality and customer service.

Baltzegar brings extensive experience in operations leadership, business transformation and continuous

improvement from roles at Aramark, WestRock and other industry-leading companies. He is a Certified Lean Six Sigma Master Black Belt.



K. DINEEN

Streamlight Inc. Taps Regional Sales Manager

As the regional sales manager of the Industrial/Fire Division at

Streamlight, Kevin Dineen is responsible for collaborating with independent sales representatives and distributors with a strong emphasis on building end-user relationships to increase revenue and expand market penetration.

"Kevin's combination of marketing acumen, communications expertise and experience with Streamlight makes him a great fit for this role," said Allen Lance, Streamlight VP of sales.

Dineen most recently served as associate producer for CBS Newspath in New York City.

He previously served as a marketing intern at Streamlight where he supported the company's product marketing and brand initiatives.



D. SCHULTZ

Rinehart Targets Hires Sales/Marketing Director

Rinehart Targets welcomed Dan Schultz as the company's new

director of sales and marketing.

James McGovern, president of Rinehart Targets, said, "[Schultz's] extensive experience in the outdoor industry combined with his expertise in sales and marketing leadership makes him the perfect fit to help drive our continued growth."

Schultz joins Rinehart after serving as VP of sales and marketing at Cuddeback. He has also held leadership roles at Wild

Communications and Fujifilm Graphic Systems.



M. GLASSER

The Headrest Safe Company Names Bus. Dev. Advisor

The Headrest Safe Company has named Marc Glasser as its business development advisor for the recreational vehicle (RV) market.

Louis Tuck, COO/CFO of The Headrest Safe Company, shared, "Being prepared, a key element of risk management, has been a consistent pursuit throughout Marc's 30+ years of U.S. government service ... We are certain that he will be a key asset to our company."

Glasser has held a prominent position as a federal leader in various disciplines, including law enforcement, VIP protection and safeguarding three U.S. Secretaries of State.



J. CURCURUTO

Outdoor Warrior's Alliance Welcomes Board Member

The Outdoor Warrior's Alliance Inc. (dba Licking River Outfitters [LRO]) announced Jim Curcuruto has joined its board of directors.

LRO founder, Robin Gassett, noted, "We are excited to welcome Jim into our organization and look forward to having him help expand our efforts to provide as many quality outdoor experiences as possible."

Curcuruto's career in the outdoor industry began in 2009. He is currently serving as the executive director for the Outdoor Stewards of Conservation Foundation.



C. ADAMEK

Sierra Bullets And Barnes Bullets Selects Marketing Manager

Colby Adamek joined Sierra Bullets and Barnes Bullets as marketing manager where he will focus on the Sierra Bullets' side of operations to expand the brand's visibility and reach.

Sierra Bullets' and Barnes Bullets' VP

of Marketing and Business Development Andrew Sparks, said, "[Adamek's] experience, technical knowledge, work ethic and ability to communicate is exactly what we've been looking for. Colby is going to hit the ground running and continue our focus on building brand awareness."

Adamek previously served as the product line manager and brand manager for Stone Glacier.

He earned a degree in finance from Montana State University.



W. FOLSOM

Swanson Russell Announces Promotions

Swanson Russell announced the promotions of Will Folsom to public relations counsel, and Sam Larson to account director.



S. LARSON

Folsom will lead PR strategy, content strategy and media relations for brands in the outdoor industry.

"We're excited for [Folsom] to make an even bigger impact for clients in this new role," said Finnegan.

Folsom has served on the public relations team at Swanson Russell since early 2021.

Larson will continue to manage and lead marketing strategy for key accounts in the outdoor industry, as well as lead new business development efforts.

"Sam's ability to build and foster strong relationships with clients is truly impressive," said Patrick Finnegan, EVP/group account director at Swanson Russell.

Larson has more than 10 years of experience in the outdoor industry, serving in various account management roles and most recently as an account supervisor.



R. HOLT

Hawke Optics Adds Regional Sales Manager

Hawke Optics' new regional sales manager to cover the Northwest region of the U.S. is Ryan Holt. He will support sales efforts in Washington, Oregon, Idaho,

Wyoming, Colorado, Montana and Utah.

Holt brings over 14 years of experience in sporting goods sales along with more than 10 years of experience as an entrepreneur.



D. BIGGERS

CzechPoint Taps National Sales Manager

Dave Biggers has joined CzechPoint as the national sales manager.

He has more than 25 years of experience in the firearms industry from various sales, marketing and training positions. Biggers also served as an airborne infantry officer in the U.S. Army Reserve.



J. TAFFIN

FMG Publications Mourns Loss

John Taffin, longtime writer for *GUNS Magazine* and *American Handgunner*,

passed away on March 10, 2025.

Widely regarded as an authority on revolvers and magnum cartridge load development, he authored several books and countless articles over several decades.

He was the founder and first chairman of The Shootists and past chairman of the Outstanding American Handgunner Awards Foundation, served on the board of the Handgun Hunters Chapter of SCI and was an NRA Life Member. He also spent nearly 30 years as a math teacher.

Taffin graduated from Kent State University and earned a master's from the University of Montana.

FMG Special Projects Editor Roy Huntington shared, "He was a true living legend — and I've never called anyone that before. He was also even more decent a fellow as you could ever imagine. They broke the mold for sure after John, honest." **SI**



BY MASSAD AYOUB

COFFEE & GUNS: FUSION MARKETING IN ACTION

“Yeah, I’d like a grande oat milk latte with three ristretto shots, one pump of vanilla, half a pump of caramel and light foam. Please steam the milk to around 140 degrees and if you could top it with just a hint of cinnamon, that’d be perfect ... oh, and I’ll take a Barrett Light 50, too.”

The above is a statement we would normally not hear in nature, but it’s entirely possible at .50 Cal Coffee & Desserts in Live Oak, Fla.

Enter, and you’ll see handsome tables and sumptuous chairs and couches — and guns, oh, so many guns. A .50-cal M2 machine gun sits on its tripod near the front door. On the wall is everything from a Thompson submachine gun to a squad automatic weapon. They are all realistic fakes, there for mood and decor only.

But as you walk deeper into the establishment, before you reach the large counter where an abundance of exotic coffees, fruit drinks, delicious desserts and light lunches can be had, there’s a kiosk. If a certain business owner is not there, all you’ll see is a heavy-duty roll-down steel wall. But if he is there, you’ll see the real guns.

When I was there, the array of products for sale was dominated by a massive Barrett Light 50 rifle. There are one or two token sporting guns, but the rest are state-of-the-art military and self-

defense rifles, shotguns and handguns.

What led to this odd fusion of a mini-gun shop in a coffeehouse? Here’s the story.

BACKGROUND

Felix Menjivar was born in El Salvador and came to the U.S. in 1983. He started ninth grade in San Francisco at a school expressly for non-English speaking students and immersed them in the language. Today he has no trace of accent.

Felix joined the U.S. Marine Corps out of high school in 1987, and in ’91, was in Desert Storm. He tried several occupations when he returned to civilian life. Finding himself in Yakima, Wash., he learned the sheriff’s office there had a reserve program. He applied, loved it and went to the full-time academy in 1998.

He advanced to detectives, then to narcotics at a time when meth was booming in Washington state. As time wore on, he burned out on law enforcement — but he would always maintain his love and respect for both the military and the domestic emergency services.

Fast-forward to 2022. Having moved to Pensacola, Fla., a few months before — seeking a warmer climate — he and his wife, Tammy, bought a house in Live Oak, Fla., that April. They were looking to work for themselves.

◀ Guests of .50 Cal Coffee & Desserts can boost their caffeine intake while searching out their next firearms or ammunition purchase. This takes multitasking while shopping to a new level.

Felix always liked the social interaction of coffee shops, and initial thoughts about a drive-thru gave way to a plan for a coffeehouse. Tammy had a nonprofit publication for children, “Kids’ News By Kids For Kids,” and they were looking for a building for its headquarters.

In this rustic town that could be described as “19th-century architecture with 19th-century values,” they found a two-story building built in 1906 and bought it. There were two apartments upstairs for family. They decided it would be a good place for a coffee shop. Tim Lemay, another dot-mil guy, did the interior.

FELICITY, FAITH & FIREARMS

A coffee shop is supposed to be a happy, relaxing place. Felix and Tammy do all they can to make .50 Cal Coffee & Desserts just that.

The place is very much Bible-themed. Felix told *SI*, “My wife is a very devout Christian. I got baptized 10 years ago. My 26-year-old daughter took me to church for that. Growing up Catholic, I had not been particularly religious. My wife walks the walk.”

Tammy added, “We want this place to glorify the Lord, and be a place where people of faith are understood. People here pray for customers. The first night we were open, we had a depressed customer. We prayed over him, and he left in a much better state of mind.”

There are Bibles at every table and a bookcase with free Bibles for customers to take.

Tammy told us, “We have a lady who does massages: Phyllis is a nurse and a licensed masseuse. This is a place where someone stressed out can get a massage and a refreshing beverage. She charges \$1 per minute for a professional massage.”

.50 Cal offers Christian karaoke every Saturday night from 7 to 11.

“Customers even bring guitars, and we get lots of people,” said Tammy, who noted their clientele doesn’t cluster into one or another particular denomination.

When I visited, there was a plaque in the window that read, “C.O.F.F.E.E / Christ Offers Forgiveness For Everyone Everywhere.”

“

Almost all of our advertising is word of mouth. Coffee brings people in and they leave with a gun.”

Felix Menjivar - Co-Owner
.50 Cal Coffee & Desserts

The religious theme does not seem to collide with the military theme. The owners' faith was tested in the summer of 2024 when Hurricane Debby did tremendous damage to the town and almost destroyed .50 Cal.

Felix relayed, “The shop opened May 17, 2024. Three months later, on August 8, Hurricane Debby came along. The shop was flooded 4' deep. We had sandbags, but the bottom window of the front door had given way. Rebuilding took many weeks and cost \$95,000. Fortunately, we had insurance. Flood insurance is expensive in this part of the country, but it paid itself off tenfold.”

The couple is planning to acquire flood barriers for next time. They now have storm shutters, too.

NOT YOUR STANDARD “DESSERT”

So, where did the guns come into the picture?

Felix explained, “When we started opening all this, we thought about a gun shop, too. After the coffee shop opened, I got an FFL at another

location. ATF made it easy; they were very helpful. I applied for a second license for this location. I have two Type Seven manufacturing FFLs; if I get a lot of inventory here, I can store it at home. After we reopened on Nov. 16, 2024, I added the ‘guns’ sign in the front window in mid-December.”

The business is still primarily coffee and dessert.

Felix said with a smile, “The guns are some of the desserts.”

He added, “Almost all of our advertising is word of mouth. Coffee brings people in and they leave with a gun. Our income is 80% coffee and 20% guns and ammo.”

The coffeehouse named “.50 Cal” is an interesting fusion of personal interests shaped as a family business. So far, it's working out quite well. **SI**

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BY BETHANY BEATHARD

THE RISE OF WOMEN IN THE HUNTING WORLD

For centuries, hunting has been largely perceived as a male-dominated tradition normally passed down from father to son. While women have always played a role in providing for their families, their contributions were often overshadowed by the notion hunting was “a man’s pursuit.”

However, in recent years, a remarkable shift has taken place as the female hunting demographic is rising. Not only do women who hunt have a more noticeable presence on social media, but some archaeological findings suggest women have participated in hunting for centuries. In 2020, *National Geographic* published an article after archaeologist Randall Haas discovered big-game hunting kits buried with female remains, suggesting more women hunted than previously expected.

Across the country, more women are taking to the field — rifle or bow in hand — embracing the sport with confidence and passion. According to data from NSSF, female participation in hunting has steadily risen over the past decade, making women the fastest-growing demographic in the outdoor industry.

THE GROWTH OF FEMALE HUNTERS

The rise of female hunters is more than anecdotal data. In line with the NSSF’s findings, a survey by the U.S.

Fish & Wildlife Service revealed women now make up around 22% of all hunters in the U.S., a number that continues to climb. Age demographics reveal this growth spans multiple generations.

While many young women are entering the hunting world for the first time, a notable percentage are middle-aged women who have taken up hunting later in life, often inspired by a desire for self-sufficiency, conservation efforts or family traditions.

A driving factor for women engaging in hunting is increased access to education and mentorship. The expansion of mentorship programs and women-only hunting events has made it easier for new hunters to get involved.

Organizations like the National Wild Turkey Federation’s Women in the Outdoors and Pheasants Forever’s Women on the Wing offer hands-on training, networking opportunities and supportive environments where women can develop their skills. Additionally, many state wildlife agencies have launched female-focused hunting workshops and events, helping bridge the gap for those without traditional hunting backgrounds.

INDUSTRY CHANGES

We’re seeing outdoor brands and retailers cater to female hunters. For years, women who hunt had to adapt to gear designed for men, oversized clothing, poorly fitting boots and a lack

◀ As a mentor, Steph Lane has seen firsthand how women’s growing participation is reshaping the outdoor community and the future of hunting. She says it’s “[becoming] a sisterhood.”

of products designed for their needs. That has changed.

Companies like DSG Outerwear, First Lite and SITKA develop female-specific hunting gear, ensuring proper fit, comfort and performance in the field. The firearm and archery industries have also responded, introducing rifles, shotguns and bows tailored to female shooters.

Marketing teams have embraced social media and use it as an effective tool to reach women. Social media continues to play a crucial role in connecting female hunters, providing platforms for education, encouragement and advocacy. Hunting groups led by women on platforms like Instagram and Facebook have created strong communities where members share experiences, provide advice and break down barriers.

INDUSTRY SUPPORT & CHANGING PERSPECTIVES

As the number of female hunters grows, so does industry-wide recognition of their impact. From hunting organizations to major outdoor brands, there is increasing support for women in the field. With endorsements from organizations and groups, investment in female-focused initiatives and a rise in mentorship programs, the hunting world is becoming more inclusive and representative.

Recognizing the growing demand, the outdoor industry has taken significant steps to support women through sponsorships, dedicated product lines and specialized initiatives.

During my recent visit to SHOT Show 2025, I was pleasantly surprised to see a noticeable increase in female representation across marketing materials, including several large-scale banners featuring women in the field. This shift is more than just a visual change; it signals a broader industry movement.

Effective marketing in the outdoor industry plays a crucial role in recruitment and retention. When women see themselves represented in advertisements, gear promotions and sponsorship campaigns, it reinforces the idea that they belong in this space, and they are more likely to purchase and stay loyal to the brand.

PERSONAL STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Women are finding community, and it brings a sense of camaraderie, determination and eagerness to the hunting industry. These qualities continue to reshape the outdoor industry and are moving the needle on the number of people in the outdoors.

Whether it's through mentorship, shared experiences or personal growth, female hunters are proving their dedication and passion for the sport. These firsthand accounts from experienced hunters and industry leaders highlight the growing presence of women in the field and the lasting impact of their involvement.

Felicia Marie, owner of Ms. Guided and founder of Women of the Wild, has witnessed this firsthand through her annual Women of the Wild goose hunt.

She reflects on the spirit of these hunts: "Women in the hunting community are eager to learn and have a strong sense of community. They come prepared, ask thoughtful questions and embrace mentorship in a way that strengthens the entire experience."



Women are finding community, and it brings a sense of camaraderie, determination and eagerness to the hunting industry.

The Women of the Wild goose hunt is one of Marie's favorite events.

"Watching participants gain confidence in the field, support one another and celebrate each success is what makes these experiences so special," she shared. "The most rewarding part is seeing them take that knowledge and confidence and later venture out with their friends, families or other women, continuing to grow in the sport."

Steph Lane, program coordinator at Pass It On – Outdoor Mentors, has also seen the power of women-led hunting experiences. One of her most

memorable events was Handled by Her — a hunt where female dog handlers from across the country gathered to teach and guide other women.

"We had beagles for chasing rabbits, coonhounds, upland bird dogs, squirrel dogs and more. As we hiked — what felt like straight up — to follow a treed squirrel dog, I remember looking around at all these women from different backgrounds and skill levels, all completely enamored by a squirrel! The rise in women hunters reflects broader cultural shifts, industry adaptation, empowerment and increased access to resources. This growing participation is reshaping the outdoor community and the future of hunting. I'm grateful to be a small part of it. These aren't just women I've mentored or hunted with once — it's become a sisterhood," she expressed.

This sense of dedication was further reinforced during an all-women's NRA hunt in Missouri Lane, which Lane and I both attended. This hunt left a lasting impression on the landowner who regularly donates hunts for these events.

Lane recalled, "The landowner and staff had prepared by setting aside several .243 loaner rifles for any participant who didn't bring their own. However, as the group of 20 women arrived and settled in, he quickly realized only one loaner rifle had been used — the rest of the women had all brought their own firearms.

"Impressed, he commented, 'I knew

the first night these ladies were serious.' He went on to say, typically, when he hosts men's groups, the first night is filled with pool games, drinks and the occasional cigar. But this time, the atmosphere was different. By 10 p.m., every woman was in bed, ready to rest up for the morning hunt."

"NO, WE'RE SHOOTING 12s."

That same determination was evident during a recent hunt with Remington and Echo Calls, where the Echo team casually asked all of the ladies if we'd be shooting 20 gauges. A little offended, we quickly replied, "No, we're shooting 12s."

To our surprise, they laughed and admitted they were all shooting 20s! It was a fun exchange that highlighted how women who hunt are not only showing up but also earning respect in the field. It's exciting to see the relationship between companies and female hunters continue to grow, fostering mutual respect and support in the industry.

These stories highlight an undeniable truth: When given the opportunity, support and mentorship, women step up with confidence, preparation and a strong sense of purpose.

By creating welcoming spaces and marketing for women in the hunting community, the industry is not only fostering new hunters but ensuring their impact carries forward for generations to come. **SI**

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BY TIM BARKER

SUPPRESSORS: CAPITALIZE ON A MARKET “BOOM”

What a difference a few years makes in the world of suppressors. Sales of these sound-dampening devices are soaring with customers emptying store shelves and creating demand for innovations and new manufacturing opportunities.

And it's all because the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) is doing a much better job at handing out tax stamps. The byzantine process that previously could take a year or longer is now spitting out approvals within days, or even hours in some instances.

To better understand the impact, consider ATF approved around 2 million tax stamps between 1934 and May 2021. Since then, another 2.1 million suppressors have been approved, according to ATF. By any definition, that's a boom.

And it's impossible to overstate the importance of those quick turnarounds. The dynamic has transformed suppressors from a niche curiosity into a staple of everyday conversations among gun owners, suggests Mark Gore, co-owner of Black Wing Shooting Center, in Delaware, Ohio.

“Everyone's talking about suppressors. Everyone's got them,” Gore

said. “Now the ball is rolling and there's a lot more people jumping on board.”

But why is a shortened wait worth a couple million suppressors?

The simple fact is people are impatient, noted Darrell Morrow, senior VP of commercial and law enforcement sales for HUXWRX Safety Co. When you pay for something, you want it now — not 10–12 months from now.

“If you already had one, it wasn't that big of a deal,” Morrow said. “But especially for first-time buyers, it was a pretty big barrier to entry.”

MOMENTUM & EDUCATION

Given all the turmoil we've witnessed in Washington D.C. — where federal jobs are being slashed — there does seem to be a legitimate concern about whether this sales surge could be threatened. What if cuts at the ATF lead to lengthier approval times?

The concern is there. But as Morrow points out, there's not much anyone in the industry can do about it.

“It's not something we harp on because it's out of our control,” he said. “We just keep our heads down, keep making good products and try to meet customer demand as best as we can.”

There's also the matter of momentum. With more gun owners

◀ Mark Gore at Black Wing Shooting Center has noted the surge in suppressor ownership — and his store has quickly jumped on board to offer a variety of SKUs in this profitable category.

buying and using suppressors, there's a level of demand in the market that wasn't there back in the slower approval days.

“The market's only going to grow,” stated Brandon Maddox, Silencer Central CEO. “As more and more people go to the range or go out and hunt with a buddy who has a silencer, it just creates additional pressure.”

Education has also played an important role.

Jess Hancock recalls arguing with customers over the legality of suppressors during the early years of his Kansas shop, The Wichita Gun Club. It was around 2016 and some of them were convinced it was a federal crime to possess a suppressor.

“That has obviously changed,” Hancock lends. “The shooting industry has done a really good job of educating consumers.”



The market's only going to grow. As more and more people go to the range or go out and hunt with a buddy who has a silencer, it just creates additional pressure.”

Brandon Maddox • CEO • Silencer Central

Also pushing things along has been the development of lighter suppressors, using titanium, which is user serviceable. This, coupled with more states allowing hunters to use suppressors, is widening the pool of potential customers, noted Ernie Beckwith, Dead Air Silencers CEO.

“This has brought a new wave of hunters into the market who are looking for a quieter and more effective way to take game,” he explained.

WHO'S BUYING THEM?

There's no one answer for who's most interested in suppressors. Much of it is

“

ATF approved around 2 million tax stamps between 1934 and May 2021. Since then, another 2.1 million suppressors have been approved, according to ATF. By any definition, that's a boom.

going to depend on your customer base.

In Ohio, Black Wing's customers are more likely to use them for recreational shooting, where they offer a range of advantages. They can help save hearing, take a bite out of the recoil and cut the amount of gases directed back toward the shooter. It's difficult to imagine a better combination of features for novice shooters.

"It just makes shooting more pleasant, even on an indoor range," Gore contended.

In Kansas, The Wichita Gun Club sees more interest from hunters, who represent about half of the shop's suppressor sales. They're particularly popular among coyote hunters, who work at night.

"Everybody's shooting suppressed thermals. You're out with your buddies and you're still able to talk," Hancock observed. "And you're not scaring everything else away when you're shooting in the dark."

DON'T MISS OUT

If you aren't currently selling suppressors — where legal — you should ask yourself why. And then consider what you might be missing out on. Could you even be risking losing some of your customers?

"Shops that don't carry suppressors are leaving money on the table with one of the fastest-growing

segments of the firearms industry," argues Beckwith with Dead Air Silencers.

If nothing else, suppressors have profit margins of 25–30% — considerably better than most guns in your store. These items also drive additional sales, including threaded barrels and subsonic ammo.

And they give customers yet another reason to visit your store, says Maddox with Silencer Central. The sale of a suppressor could bring the same customer back to your store three or four times as they work through the process.

"So, it's additional traffic you can bring into your store. And it makes you a trusted resource, where others in your area aren't," Maddox said.

Unfortunately, there's another side of the equation if you are sitting on the sidelines. You may be giving competitors a chance to gain the same advantage over you.

Continued on p. 44

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THE AMMUNITION SQUEEZE

By Bryan Hendricks

Ukraine War Effort To Strain Ammo, Reloading Components In Bear Market

It takes 21 lbs. of M6 or about 24 lbs. of IMX-101 smokeless powder to propel a 155mm artillery shell, the primary battlefield fare in the Ukraine War.

They use a lot of it in that conflict. Inventories are short, and manufacturers are working apace to rebuild stocks while supplying Ukraine's war effort. As it has for years, this will continue to have a conspicuous effect on the supply of sporting ammunition and reloading supplies in the United States.

IMPACT OF TRUMP 2.0

On the other hand, demand for ammo and reloading components is currently relaxed. It is largely attributable to the election of a Republican president.

Aaron Oelger, VP of marketing for Hodgdon Powder Co., said Republican control of the White House and Congress will probably avert the hoarding of

ammo and reloading components that usually occurs during a Democrat administration.

"It's a little bit of a puzzle still," Oelger noted. "On the one hand, we have falling demand. It's no secret demand fell right after the first [Donald Trump] election. People feel a little more secure. Everybody [retailers and distributors] bought 'long' because they thought Hillary [Clinton] was going to be elected. We had high inventories and slumping demand. Last year, people thought Trump was likely to win. I don't think you saw the massive inventory buildup like there was eight years ago."

Oelger contended it's too early to bet on the ammo market for the next couple of years.

"Trump 2.0 is very different than Trump 1.0," he elaborated. "I'm not sure what to expect for this year, but with demand slumping a little bit, it's probably not where we want to be from a supply perspective. But, I think product will still be available."

The difference, Oelger points out, is

no major wars were being fought from 2016–2020. Supply was high, but so was manufacturing capability. Manufacturing capability is the wild card as long as the war endures.

“Back then there was plenty of manufacturing capacity available, but it’s simply not the case this year,” he asserted. “Demand for powder and propellants to rebuild stocks is intense. They’re making artillery propellant, but gunpowder is not being made.”

Consumers are noticing conspicuous shortages of 4895 and 4350 powders in the Hodgdon and IMR lines. Retumbo and Trail Boss are also scarce, according to Oelger. H4895, H4350, Trail Boss and Retumbo are made in Australia, he added.

Shipping them also affects consumer prices. The IMR variants are made in Canada, whose dicey trade relationship with the Trump administration could increase prices due to tariffs.

“4350, 4895 and the like are all extruded powders,” Oelger explained. “They’re in high demand. People want those a lot. The challenge of shipping product from Australia is substantial. Shipping prices are insane, and there’s limited shipping space.”

Some popular powders have been absent from shelves for so long some consumers believe they are out of production. It’s not the case, Oelger said.

“Trail Boss? We haven’t got any Trail Boss for the fifth year,” Oelger stated. “We have not been able to get it made for us. Demand

“



I’m not sure what to expect for this year, but with demand slumping a little bit, it’s probably not where we want to be from a supply perspective. But, I think product will still be available.

Aaron Oelger • VP of Marketing
Hodgdon Powder Co.

”

is off the charts right now because we can’t get it. When we haven’t been able to get a product for five years, demand is astronomical because it can’t be built.”

SHOTGUNNING TRENDS

Popular shotgunning powders are also in short supply.

“Clays, International, Universal, Unique; you can’t find it,” Oelger noted. “It’s not available. We have not been able to get those powders for four years. We have two new shotgun powders, High Gun and Perfect Pattern. Those sell really well, but we can’t get a consistent supply of other powders. Perfect Pattern and High Gun are different powders, but shotshell is a hard niche to fill because those products are unique and high in demand.”

Christian Hogg, director of marketing for Fiocchi of America, said the availability of primers, brass, shotshell hulls, bullets and spherical shot is stable — but he added the shotshell and metallic

markets are different.

“We’re [Fiocchi] known as a shotshell brand, but we do have centerfire products,” he provided. “We recently introduced an enhanced line of rifle ammo — four SKUs — with optimized velocities across a variety of barrel lengths. Each of those four calibers has a specific powder used on grain weight. Last June, we were not able to build it until December [2024], because we couldn’t get the powder we needed.”

According to Hogg, to make sufficient amounts of these products Fiocchi made significant capital investments, including new machinery.

“Our plan was to increase capacity and put more product on the market,” he said. “We’re hampered to maximize that because we’re not getting regular powder deliveries. We were told we’re getting the same amount of powder as the year before and nothing more.”

Manufacturers make and sell a lot more shotgun shells because



Powders for reloading rifle, shotgun and handgun cartridges (and also for muzzleloading) are probably going to be in short supply for the foreseeable future.

shooters consume a lot more ammunition. A deer hunter might fire three or four rounds in a season. A skeet shooter typically fires 50–100 rounds in a session. Despite the higher consumption, Hogg observed, shotshell components, besides powder, are plentiful.

“Fiocchi has a primer manufacturing facility in Italy,” he informed. “Efficiencies have been done on our end to produce more products. As for the rest of the market, CCI and Winchester are making their own stuff. A lot of it has corrected itself. There’s been some kind of reset.”

NAVIGATING OBSTACLES

On the other hand, there is no easy remedy to alleviate the shortage of range-ready ammo due to the shortage of nitrocellulose.

“In January 2024, we had no nitrocellulose to make powder,” Hogg said. “The manufacturer we do business with had government contracts that needed to be filled before they pushed anything out in the commercial market. There are still issues with nitrocellulose. It hasn’t resolved itself.”

Ironically, Hogg said gun powder production actually increased 40% over the past couple of years. A great percentage of it is used for military contracts. The remainder trickles down to the consumer market.

“With some manufacturers, we’ve been able to renegotiate contracts with powder suppliers,” Hogg said. “We’re paying in advance

“



Efficiencies have been done on our end to produce more products. As for the rest of the market, CCI and Winchester are making their own stuff. A lot of it has corrected itself. There’s been some kind of reset.

Christian Hogg
Director of Marketing
Fiocchi of America

”

for guaranteed delivery. Last year we could get powder, but you didn’t know what kind of powder or when it would be delivered.”

This uncertainty dramatically affects research, development and delivery of new products, Hogg stated.

“We’re trying to get unique powders for specific new product developments,” he said. “It didn’t have an effect this year, and I feel pretty confident about things this year in terms of powder availability, but some folks are still going to struggle to get powder. Smaller manufacturers, if they are still sourcing powders, hulls, primer and shot, might face challenges if they don’t have existing relationships or if they can’t get their hands on powders and other components.”

A “TOUGH MARKET”

Like Oelger, Hogg has noticed the market soften after the 2024 presidential election.

“It’s not moving as robustly as it was prior to now,” he affirmed.

“Federal and Winchester are starting to put out consumer rebates to encourage sales. I haven’t seen that in a while. Mail-in rebates, where you get a rebate from a consumer ammo manufacturer, is not one of my favorite things to do. It’s not an ideal way to do business.”

Given the matrix of limitations, Hogg presumes 2025 will be a challenging year for the ammunition and reloading industries.

“It’s going to be a tough market in ’25,” he proposed. “It’s the early part of the year so far. Getting through SHOT, initial sales are positive compared to what we thought from Fiocchi’s standpoint. Orders are not up, but there’s good visibility from the first quarter. Typically, we try to have people book out the year in advance. Now we’re getting 90-day visibility instead of 180 days.”

Even if the Ukraine war ends in 2025, the consumer market probably won’t stabilize until the U.S. and NATO replenish their artillery inventories. It could take a long time. **SI**



Due to demands to supply artillery ammunition for the war in Ukraine, new supplies of gunpowder for reloaders will probably be curtailed in 2025.



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BY NANCY KEATON

HUNTING THE HUNTERS

Conservation Concerns Fuel Predator & Varmint Sales

“A few years ago, the Department of Natural Resources [DNR] said they put a camera on a coyote den, and that *one den* had 44 fawns in it.” This astounding statement came from Mark Abel with HOP Armament/HOP Munitions in Ashland, Ohio, as we were discussing how varmints and predators affect wildlife management.

Predators. Varmints. None of us want them killing or harassing our livestock and our pets, and we also don't want them destroying

the wildlife population. Thankfully, there is a variety of excellent equipment available to help, and retailers should think about tailoring some of their marketing to focus on the need for conservation.

VARMINT TRENDS

Abel continued to discuss the concerns in his area. As for varmints, he said raccoon hunting has lost popularity because the fur market value has declined, but hunters still recognize the importance of keeping this population under control. Groundhog hunters are a large sector of the market as well.

However, one threat of big concern a lot of people don't think about is opossums.

“One of the most detrimental animals for the ecosystem is opossums. People like that opossums eat ticks, but they don't realize they destroy turkey nests and eat the eggs,” he said.

When asked which firearms are popular for hunting predators and varmints, and if there are any new and upcoming changes, Abel noted, "The standard varmint guns for groundhogs around here are the classic .22 LR and the .17 HMR. But there are a lot of new calibers coming that are interesting to see like the .22 Creedmoor and the .22 TCM."

Abel says for coyotes, hunters are using the 6.5 Creedmoor, .300 Blackout, 5.56 or .22-250.

PREDATOR HUNTER STAPLES

Kelley Powers, founding owner of Final Flight Outfitters in Union City, Tenn., confirmed coyotes are the biggest problem in their area as well.

"Coyotes can do a lot of damage, especially to turkey nests. Habitat management and conservation is a big push right now," he shared.

Powers said hunting for predators is a year-round activity for the most part, but from a sales standpoint the peak for them is January and February (which is coyote mating season).

For gear, Powers says they carry many different rifles and makes, and different platforms to choose from.

"Obviously your smaller caliber rifles are popular, such as .223/5.56 and .22-250. Those are the staples from a gear standpoint," he noted.

Customers are also interested in new tripods, bipods and an adequate shooting rest.

When asked what he'd advise a new predator or varmint hunter, Powers stated, "The first thing I would do is make sure they have an adequate firearm. A lot of it depends on the terrain they're hunting or if they are hunting open fields."

When shooting in close quarters, he recommends a shotgun as it's highly effective in that area.

"From there, we go through the setup to make sure it's comfortable," he said. "We also recommend a good call. We try to keep it budget-conscious because some of these calls can be quite expensive as well. The electronic FOXPRO is a staple. They're very popular and we offer multiple different styles of FOXPROS as well as e-callers."

Powers pointed out that because deer hunting is such a huge sport in their area, they talk with the customer to find out if a rifle or shotgun they already have in their gun safe will

work for hunting the predators or varmints they are concerned about.

CONNECTING WITH HUNTERS

As far as marketing to the predator/varmint hunter, Abel noted while HOP Armament/HOP Munitions initially focused on the tactical market, they've since learned just how incredibly vast the hunting market is.

He elaborated, "For instance, we were contacted by the USDA out of Texas to develop a 62-grain non-lead 5.56 round specifically for culling hogs. So, we developed a 62-grain round called a REX Round and it's all copper. They were very happy with that, and they ordered a lot of rounds."

"My word of encouragement to retailers would be that the predator world is growing; we're worried about hogs coming up, and we're worried about bobcats coming in."

Mark Abel • Management Team
HOP Armament/HOP Munitions
Ashland, Ohio



Built on the powerful and proven Patriot chassis, Mossberg Predator rifles are both optics- and suppressor-ready and available in a variety of calibers, patterns and barrel lengths to appeal to a wide range of predator hunters. (Image: O.F. Mossberg & Sons)

I asked Abel what he would say to retailers to encourage them to focus on the wildlife management aspect for sales.

"My word of encouragement to retailers would be that the predator world is growing; we're worried about hogs coming up, and we're worried about bobcats coming in. There are species I've never heard of, but my buddies in the DNR talk about them," he said. "So, I would encourage retailers to give their customers some good options not only with the ammo and the rifles but with the accessories



Mark Abel and his daughter, Ruth, commemorate the conclusion of a successful turkey hunt. Predator/varmint hunters do their part to protect natural ecosystems to allow game animals — like wild turkeys — to thrive, facilitating better hunting seasons. This is one tangible benefit of predator/varmint hunting you can share with customers interested in year-round or night pursuits.

like thermals and suppressors as well.”

SUPPRESSORS ON THE RISE

When asked what advice he would give to someone new to predator or varmint hunting, Abel identified a burgeoning subcategory.

“I always try to find out what the customer wants so I’m not selling them what I prefer, but what best fits their wants and needs,” he said. “But if it’s just for predator hunting, I’m old school. I don’t particularly care for the ARs for hunting. It’s just a personal thing. There are a lot of good hunters who carry ARs in the woods and I have no problem with that. They have their reasons.

“Semiautomatic rifles allow for quick follow-up shots, and the 5.56 gives them the option of .223/5.56 out of the same rifle and they can

put a suppressor on it. It won’t be ‘Hollywood quiet’ but it will be quieter.”

He recommends the Ruger American because it can utilize a suppressor. (The Ruger American Predator is available in several popular calibers that would appeal to predator hunters such as .204 Ruger, .223, .22-250 and .350 Legend.)

Abel continued, “If they’re looking at something more, then the .308 is probably my favorite round. We make a 190-grain subsonic REX Round and a 190-grain hollowpoint boattail so you don’t have to spend more money, and you can use the hollowpoint boattails to sight it in and use the REX Rounds for hunting.”

These days, more hunters are buying suppressors for use at night,

according to Abel.

“One of the problems people are having is we’re ‘country’ but we’re not like ‘out West country,’ so if they’re hunting coyotes at night and they’re not shooting suppressed, neighbors are hearing the gunshots and calling the sheriff,” he noted. “So, more hunters are going to suppressed shooting, and when they do, most of them prefer the 6.5, the .308 or the 300 Blackout. Those three rounds suppress well if you get the right ammo to match.”

He also mentioned adding thermal optics and a good electronic call helps tremendously to make sure the hunt is successful.

Hunting with a suppressor is also something Powers is seeing more of today.

“Suppressors are not only great for hearing protection, but you can sometimes get off a second shot. Even though it’s obviously not ‘silent,’ you are a little more undetected.”

Kelley Powers • Founding Owner
Final Flight Outfitters
Union City, Tenn.

“With the decrease in the amount of time it is taking to get an approved tax stamp, more people are taking advantage of it,” he stated. “Suppressors are not only great for hearing protection, but you can sometimes get off a second shot. Even though it’s obviously not ‘silent,’ you are a little more undetected. I’ve personally noticed while coyote hunting if there’s more

than one coyote, the chances of getting a second shot drastically increases when I'm shooting suppressed."

A MARKET WITH GROWTH ON THE HORIZON

Both Abel and Powers agree the predator market is growing as more non-native predators and varmints invade new areas and people realize the need to control them to conserve and protect native species.

Retailers can help by clearly focusing on the need for conservation



Hunters Specialties Expert Edge Predator Combo Pack



Kelley Powers sits at the ready while calling in a coyote with his SIG SAUER M400. While not shooting suppressed here, Powers has noted its effectiveness generating follow-up shots. "If there's more than one coyote, the chances of getting a second shot drastically increases when I'm shooting suppressed," he said.

and by outfitting their customers with the firearm that can fit their needs for hunting, as well as controlling predators and varmints.

And finally, advising customers of the benefits of utilizing a rifle with a

suppressor should not be considered an "upsell," but an important piece of equipment that can drastically increase their success rate in keeping their local wildlife population healthy and thriving. **SI**

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BY CAROLEE ANITA BOYLES

Use Events To Build Connections During Slower Buying Season

SUMMERTIME SALES

T

raditionally, sales are slower in summer. A special event — whether it includes food, music or promotional pricing — can bring in customers and improve sales ahead of hunting season and year-end buying.

Mal Madsen, CMO of Modern Warriors in St. George, Utah, shared her events are usually based on a holiday.

“We like to center our sales around the patriotic holidays,” she said. “Also, since we’re in Utah, we like to celebrate Pioneer Day [July 24] with an in-store-only sale as well.”

Madsen takes advantage of holiday themes when she builds events around those times.

“A lot of the time, we’ll play off of the history of certain holidays,” she added. “Sometimes we give away products with purchases instead of just a percentage off all items. We also lean on our rewards system, offering double points back on certain brands or making points worth more during a certain time frame.”

Giveaways also do well in the store, Madsen added.

“Because we’re in Utah, we have to use raffles that are tied to a value from purchasing a product, but we can often get brands to collaborate with us on this, too,” she said.

Most promotion is done through email marketing.

“We can advertise on Instagram stories, but we never mention events in posts on the feed or they will be removed by Meta,” Madsen noted.

Manufacturers and distributors often help Modern Warriors with their sales events, but Madsen advised it's best to plan well in advance of the date.

"Sharing our stories on social media to [the manufacturers'] respective accounts helps, but anything like that needs to be arranged and approved ahead of time with the brand's specific social

media or marketing directors," she explained. "We've also planned email blasts on the same day with brands so we're targeting both audiences simultaneously."

Summer sales planned for 2025 are fairly typical of what Modern Warriors does every year, according to Madsen.

"For summer, we're planning a sale on Memorial Day and Independence Day," she confirmed. "Those are the

only holiday-specific sales we have for this summer. We've also started planning sales around Amazon Prime Day [historically held in mid-July] since many shoppers are already online that week."

BENEFIT: KICKSTART HUNTING SEASON

At Sports World Hunting Headquarters in Tulsa, Okla., Owner T. L. Denton said her store holds one summer event each year.

"It's a promotion to start off hunting season, so we have it in August," she said. "We ask all our reps to come in to tell the customers about their products."



**DON'T LET THE
SUMMER RESIGN
YOUR SALES TO
THE DOLDRUMS.
PLAN A SPECIAL
EVENT TO
CONNECT WITH
CUSTOMERS AND
BRIGHTEN YOUR
BOTTOM LINE.**

Product lines include firearms, accessories, ammunition, safes and everything else she carries in the store; about the only thing she doesn't carry is a lot of clothing.

One thing that makes the event unique is the reps who fill in as sales associates and wait on customers.

"The customers can talk to them," Denton noted. "The customers love having the reps wait on them."

Denton recounted the rep for Benchmade brings along his engraver so he can engrave the Benchmade



The annual Kevin's Game Fair, which celebrates its ninth year this fall (Nov. 6–8), attracts hundreds of people from throughout Georgia and neighboring states. Rather than being a traditional sales event, the Game Fair raises money to support Tall Timbers Research Station. It enables Kevin's to be viewed as a "destination" by guests and elevates the store's ties with its local community and hunters. Attendees of Kevin's Game Fair have the opportunity to dine and interact with vendors at the historic Chiquapin Plantation (**top**) and shoot at The Ranges of Oakfield (**bottom**) — making this a truly regional event.

knives customers purchase.

Customers wait for this event every year, Denton shared.

"We've had it for many years," she said. "I'd say about 30 years. We always have a really good turnout."

Most of Sports World's advertising for their summer event is through radio.

"We use a little TV," Denton said. "Facebook doesn't help us much anymore, but we do use Instagram and a lot of radio."

VALUE OF A CHARITY (RATHER THAN SALES) EVENT

Kevin Kelly, owner of Kevin's Fine Outdoor Gear & Apparel in Thomasville, Ga., takes a long-game approach to special events.

Instead of a sale, he holds an annual charity event benefitting Tall Timbers Research Station, a privately funded research organization that focuses on pine woods conservation and bobwhite quail management in the southeastern U.S. He doesn't sell anything at this event, but uses his annual Game Fair as a time to build relationships with both customers and providers.

The result is Kevin's national reputation as a "destination."

To participate in the Game Fair event, customers must purchase a ticket; it's not open to just anyone who walks in.

"It's a sellout event every year," Kelly shared. "All the proceeds go to Tall Timbers' quail research. We start off with a special dinner and cocktail party on Thursday night at the Marriott in downtown Thomasville. We call it the Quail Bash."

During the dinner and cocktail party, they hold a short live auction and have a band for music and dancing. On Friday morning, participants convene at one of several internationally known historic quail plantations in the Red Hills area around Thomasville.

"The first event of the day is at 8 a.m.," Kelly said. "We take our guests on a two-hour ride through the plantation on wagons and discuss quail habitat, and why quail hunting in the Thomasville area is the best in the world."

Biologists share their insight into many aspects of quail conservation, including pineland management with

controlled burning, plants important to quail habitat and how burning keeps those plant species healthy.

Following the wagon ride, the actual Game Fair begins.

"We have 50–60 invited vendors and underwriters on the grounds," Kelly shared. "It's a meet and greet. We have 400 to 500 people there. Then at about 12:30 p.m., we have an outdoor catered linen cloth 'super lunch.'"

Following lunch, the biggest pack of foxhounds in the U.S. — located in Thomasville — comes for a visit. Several car companies, including Grenadier and Range Rover, have outdoor vehicles on display.

"All kinds of gun and shooting sports vendors are there," Kelly said. "There are events for the ladies who don't shoot or hunt. We also have one of the finest Lab trainers in the country. He brings his Labs and puts on demonstrations. Someone also comes from Ryglen English Cocker in Illinois."

Guests can watch dog demonstrations, see artists at work, talk to liquor distillery representatives or taste wines.

"That evening, we have a private sit-down dinner on another plantation," Kelly said. "Wine stewards come and teach guests about the wines. After a great dinner, everyone gets a good night's rest."

A COMMUNITY AFFAIR FOR THOMASVILLE

Saturday, the town of Thomasville opens its doors to Game Fair guests. Thomasville is known for its antique stores and historic sites such as the Confederate Prisoner of War Camp, Birdsong Nature Center and bike trails.

"Thomasville is unbelievable on Saturdays," Kelly noted. "You get a taste of the South and how things were in the 1800s when it was founded. It's a nice, American town. Plus, the county here has a shooting facility that's among the best in the U.S. This year, we're planning to host a breakfast out on the gun range on Saturday morning that's optional. For people who want to



Kevin Kelly, right, hands a long gun to a guest at a recent trade show. His store exhibited at the DSC Convention and Sporting Expo earlier this year to showcase its line of apparel, as well as its exclusive line of high-end plantation shotguns.



**THIS IS AN EVENT
THAT WILL CREATE
CUSTOMER FRIENDSHIP
BETWEEN THEM
AND THE KEVIN'S
ORGANIZATION AND
OUR FAMILY. THAT'S
THE VALUE I GET OUT
OF IT, AND WHAT HAS
SET THE PACE FOR
WHAT WE DO."**

Kevin Kelly • Owner
Kevin's Fine Outdoor Gear & Apparel
Thomasville, Ga.

do it, we'll have some gun people out on the range."

People travel from all over the country for the Game Fair, Kelly said.

"Not only do people come for a really nice event and to touch and taste what we do here, but we're able to give back to someone who's working all over the Southeast and beyond trying to restore wild quail back in places where they haven't had the habitat to do so," he relayed. "This gives us a national presence with ranchers and quail conservation people."

This connection has brought guests from Texas, the Carolinas, Kansas and many other areas with an interest in quail to Thomasville and Tall Timbers.

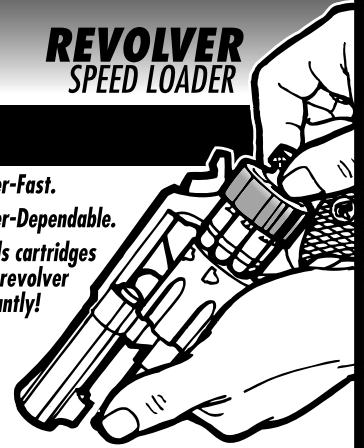
"It's a win for everyone," Kelly continued. "Our event is for people to enjoy the day, have a good time and maybe buy something from the vendors. This is an event that will create customer friendship between them and the Kevin's organization and our family. That's the value I get out of it, and what has set the pace for what we do. We don't want you to just come buy a box of shotgun shells and leave: We want customers to realize the value our business gives to our community and to the whole country."

Don't let the summer resign your sales to the doldrums. Plan a special event to connect with customers and brighten your bottom line. **SI**

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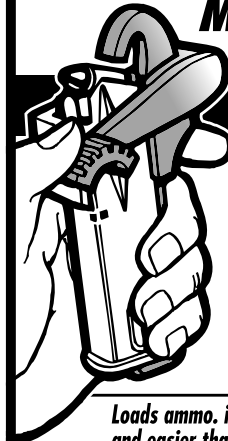
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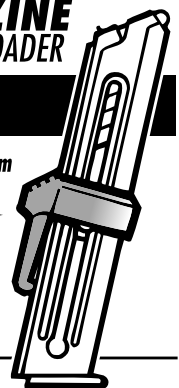
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ACCESSORY ADVANTAGE

By *Brian Armstrong*

Strategies To Boost Accessory Sales In Firearms Retail

In the competitive world of firearms retail, selling guns alone isn't always enough to cover expenses.

Accessories such as magazines, sights, holsters, red dots, belts, cleaning kits and cases present significant opportunities for retailers to boost revenue, build customer loyalty and enhance the shopping experience.

I wanted to see what retailers, instructors,

and customers had to say. So, I tossed up a social media post on LinkedIn and reached thousands of people.¹ One standout trend is people are willing to pay a little extra if the customer service is excellent and a knowledgeable salesperson assists them.

From what I'm hearing, retail stores are not leveraging one of their most significant advantages: building rapport with the customers who walk in.

Stores are missing out because these add-on items often carry higher profit margins than firearms and can turn a one-time gun buyer into a repeat customer.

The firearms industry has its unique challenges, particularly because it can be confusing for customers. Sometimes, those of us in the industry talk over people's heads or assume the person we are having a conversation with knows what specific terms mean.

A brick-and-mortar store can win out over online stores by being the go-to source for knowledge. Tom Adamski, from Texas, is a

precision shooting enthusiast. He shared what he's looking for when interacting with an associate at the sales counter.

"As an experienced shooter and customer, I am sometimes befuddled by the lack of knowledge and willingness to educate/share on the part of some retailers," he said. "Speaking with others who actually use the products/accessories is important, too."

EDUCATE CUSTOMERS ON ACCESSORY BENEFITS

Educating customers on the value of accessories is the first step. Many customers, especially new firearms owners, may not fully understand what accessories are available beyond the gun itself. Have discussions with them about how these products make shooting safer and can improve performance.

When the staff is well-informed, they can confidently recommend accessories tailored to a customer's needs, but it starts with the basics — including safety.

Joel Gossett told me, "As an NRA Instructor and Training Counselor, I often take students to the store to assist in purchasing firearms and gear. Most of the staff don't understand firearms safety and the needs of new shooters. Often, they'll pull a firearm out of the cabinet with their finger on the trigger and hand it to the customer, muzzle pointing at the customer. It's not a good look, considering I just taught them about firearm safety. Many don't even know what holsters will fit firearms they sell."

SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISONS: BELTS & HOLSTERS

A store that customers can walk into has several advantages with products like belts and holsters. Most people, especially first-time gun owners, know nothing about gun belts and don't realize they are stiffer than the ones they already own.

A quality gun belt keeps the holster secure and in place while also adding

comfort. Most individuals have never tried a gun belt, and I often say, "You can't miss what you've never had."

Holsters are a big seller, and we all have more of them sitting in a box than we know what to do with. We buy one, but for various reasons it feels uncomfortable, doesn't ride right or doesn't fit the gun well.

You can show the difference between a poorly made holster and a quality one by taking out a holster and explaining how, on some, you can adjust the cant, the belt clip and retention. "Bargain" holsters don't always cover the trigger or fit the gun well, while others lack good retention.

Many holsters are designed to be worn in specific positions, and a traditional IWB holster does not always work well for appendix carry. The right holster for the right position is safer, and it will improve draw time.

SIGHTS

Older shooters can significantly benefit from upgraded sights. Red dots or high-contrast sights make a major difference for someone with poor vision. My eyesight isn't as good as it used to be, and I didn't realize what I was missing until I tried different options. I show a variety of sights to students, and many end up wanting an upgrade because they see the improvement in the sight picture when comparing different designs.

There is a wide range of sights, from night sights to fiber optics to ones that will work with red dots. There's no need to stock a wide selection because the customer is looking to you for guidance, so you only need to pick a couple of styles in different categories.

Again, staff training plays a crucial role in this situation, as employees must be able to explain the benefits in a clear and relatable way. This approach makes it sound less like a sales pitch and more like you're teaching them something.

BUNDLING

Another effective tactic is bundling accessories with firearm purchases.

When a customer buys a gun, retailers can suggest a pre-packaged "starter kit" that includes essentials like a holster, extra magazine and cleaning kit at a discount compared to buying each item separately. This approach simplifies decision-making for the buyer, increases the perceived value of the purchase and encourages them to buy while they are there.

A "Concealed Carry Package" with a pistol, IWB holster and belt can be a complete package for someone who just got their concealed carry license.

PRODUCT PLACEMENT

Product placement has a big impact on sales. To attract attention to a bundled deal, consider using a central shelf space dedicated to showcasing an example of all the items together.

You can also implement cross-merchandising strategies, such as positioning holsters next to handguns. Displaying red dots and sights near guns can also spark interest.

There's no need to group identical products together. Mixing different products increases the chances of customers asking questions about items right in front of them.

ASK QUESTIONS

Speaking of questions, train your staff to ask questions like "How do you plan to carry?" and then they can recommend a holster that meets their needs.

“People are willing to pay a little extra if the customer service is excellent and a knowledgeable salesperson assists them.”

▶ An associate from J.R. Shooting Sports walks a customer through the selling points of popular packs and backpacks. During these interactions, make sure your staff is trained to ask good questions, then listen for what a customer is looking for and offer solutions.



This extra step stands out to prospective customers like John McDonald, director at Threat Ready Inc.

“As I age, customer service becomes critical. It’s not always price point; it has to be reasonable, but excellent service goes a very long way!” he exclaimed.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS FOR REPEAT BUSINESS

Surviving in today’s market and making a profit is about turning a gun buyer into a repeat customer. Show genuine interest in understanding what the customer needs, and oftentimes, you’ll discover they may not even know themselves. This is your opportunity to guide them toward their next purchase.

J.R. Shooting Sports is a family-owned retailer in Aurora, Ill. Associate McKenzie [last name withheld by request] explained, “We like to talk to the customer and hear what they want and what they do, so we find what you need and do not try to make a quick dollar. Our customers never leave feeling strong-armed into buying something they don’t really want just because it was up on the rack.”

Offering complimentary

services, such as sight installation or bore sighting with a purchase, transforms a basic red dot sale into a positive interaction. This strategy gives physical stores a competitive advantage online retailers cannot match.

“To turn accessories into a bigger source of profit, you have to educate customers and get creative.”

Additionally, hosting workshops on topics like holster selection or firearm maintenance highlights related products and engages customers. Teaming with instructors can be similar to having additional employees without payroll costs. You can even get them to run the workshop.

Brian Kapnick has been an NRA Training Counselor

and instructor for 30 years. He highlighted a missed opportunity for stores that don’t focus on sales past the gun.

“In my experience, most who work in showrooms at the gun counter are only interested in selling firearms,” he observed. “They’re not looking at the whole package. How about holsters, practice ammunition, carry ammunition, and extra magazines? Yes, the employee will show the customer the very basics of how this gun works — if asked — but does not have time to go in-depth. Working with instructors can help fill the gap.”

Increasing accessory sales in a firearms retail store requires a combination of planning, creativity and a strong focus on customer needs. To turn accessories into a bigger source of profit, you have to educate customers and get creative. Although these items may be smaller purchases compared to firearms, they can have a considerable impact on your bottom line. Implementing some of these strategies can position your store as a destination for all of a shooter’s needs. **\$1**

Footnote:
<https://tinyurl.com/4wvysyxv>



BE YOUR OWN CUSTOMER

By Alan W. Farrant

You will be able to make customers enjoy your shooting merchandise retail store more — and make them return more often — if you fully understand their attitudes. What do customers think about your place of business? Here are some thoughts of average shooting merchandise customers:

"I want an inviting storefront." Keep the glass clean and make sure the merchandise displayed is typical of supplies available inside. Give the entire front of the building a new coat of paint. Your store name sign should include the word "GUNS."

"I want to think I'm welcome." When a customer first enters your store, make sure you give a genuine friendly smile and a warm "Hello!" This first welcome is more important than the first words on your part, "May I help you?" One or two chairs toward the front of the store make it easy for prospective customers to sit and examine merchandise or glance through a book.

"I want plenty of service." Experts claim this is often the most important thought customers have. "Service" means employees "know everything there is to know" about shooting merchandise — how to assemble firearms, how to make this and do that. Many customers are beginners and may be shy about asking questions. They want the full attention of the salesperson while they talk.

"I want a good selection of merchandise." If you don't have room (or the money) to

stock all popular items, then concentrate on those most in demand. Buy a diversified selection of these popular ones so customers have a good choice. This will bring them back!

"I want to see informative signs." Let customers know whether you accept credit cards, and which ones. What time do you open and close? Tell them. People who work all day need to know when they can buy from you. And remember, many of these customers want some help

IF THEY CAN'T GET YOUR HELP, YOU WILL FIND THEY ARE TRADING ELSEWHERE.

from you — for you to explain and show how an item operates. If they can't get your help, you will find they are trading elsewhere.

"I want this store to appreciate my being here." We all want to be appreciated and liked. Make sure all customers get some attention for the full time they are in your store. If you know it, call the person by name. Now, this doesn't mean to be pesty with a lot of idle chatter. Talk just enough to let customers know you are truly glad of their presence.

"I want this shooting merchandise store to seem as though it is mine." When a store has highly efficient employees, pleasant surroundings and a full line of merchandise, customers automatically like buying merchandise there. After

being in the shop a few times, they learn where certain items are placed and automatically walk to that area. As they move about the store, they hear a friendly voice speaking to them. They feel comfortable — welcomed! And they're glad to be there.

When a customer *does* come back, then management can relax and be assured the store has been inspected for perfection, *not* inspected by management, inspected and *approved* by a satisfied, happy customer.

See to it your shooting merchandise store is approved! **SI**

Editor's Note: Originally published in the Sept. 1981 issue of *Shooting Industry*, we hope you enjoyed this piece by former columnist Alan W. Farrant — and feel challenged to put yourselves in your customers' shoes and achieve the ultimate goal of being "customer approved." There's a theme brewing here ...

Last month's story on branding by Doug VanderWoude ("Branding Your 4 Walls & Beyond") called on readers to enter their store through the customer entrance and incorporate better signage to "show" them where they are upon visiting.

This customer-centric approach continues in next month's issue. Hank Yacek asks dealers to put on their "customer hat," and presents ways they can cast a wider net to secure sales during slower periods. The point here: in slowdowns, any effort to make your store more personable will stand out above those who don't prioritize the experience of their customers.

Studying timeless advice from almost 44 years ago doesn't hurt.

— Jade Moldae, SI Editor

NEW PRODUCTS

TO VIEW HUNDREDS OF PRODUCTS
FEATURED IN PAST ISSUES, VISIT:

SHOOTINGINDUSTRY.COM/CATEGORY/FIRST-LOOK

By Jenna Buckley



SMITH & WESSON BRANDS INC.

(800) 331-0852
smith-wesson.com

Smith & Wesson's **CSX E-SERIES** is available in four 9mm configurations with the choice of a 3.1" or 3.6" barrel. Two models include 12-, 15- and 17-round magazines and there are two 10-round compliant variants. CSX E-Series pistols are optics-ready and utilize an RMS-C/507K footprint. Due to this feature, the pistols include S&W's ClearSight cut that diverts gasses away from the optic lens, leaving an unobstructed view. The modular grip adapter allows the user to size down their frame for deep concealment or size up for better handling and increased capacity. The enhanced trigger has a light, clean break, improved reset and straighter pull to the rear. Additional features include interchangeable backstraps, ambidextrous controls, standard white-dot sights and a flat-black finished frame.



VORTEX OPTICS

(800) 486-7839
vortexoptics.com

Available in 3 MOA or multi-reticle, and purpose-built for the fast pace of turkey hunting and wingshooting, the **VIPER SHOTGUN ENCLOSED MICRO RED DOT** from Vortex delivers an ultra-low-profile design and wide field of view for intuitive shooting and superior recoil control. Its enclosed design and integrated universal mount ensure seamless operation and maximum protection against the elements. Features include adjustment graduation, durable aluminum enclosed housing, aspherical lens, motion activation and 10-minute auto-shutoff, top buttons for quick adjustments, side-load battery compartment and it is waterproof, fog proof and shockproof. It is 4.86" long and weighs 2.14 oz.



OUTDOOR EDGE

(888) 249-6942
outdooredge.com

The new **RAZOR XD** series from Outdoor Edge offers four 3" models. The **XD1** is equipped with black oxide utility and sheepfoot blades and comfortable, nylon tan scales for a solid grip. The **XD2** has unique gray TPE scales and overlay yellow ABS for an eye-catching look and three blade profiles: utility saw, black oxide standard utility and 50% serrated utility. It comes standard with a blade storage utility pod. The **XD3** has gray anodized aluminum scales and multiple blade options: utility saw, black oxide utility and sheepfoot blades. A blade storage pod is included. The **XD4** has green-anodized aluminum scales. It also comes with a utility saw, black oxide utility and 50% serrated utility blades, and a blade storage pod.



QUIETKAT

(970) 594-8524
quietkat.com

Built on a durable 17" frame, QuietKat's **RANGER XR** e-bike is powered by a robust 750W hub-drive motor producing 85Nm of torque. The dual-battery system, combining a 12.8Ah on-board battery with an additional 12.8Ah extra battery, delivers over 25Ah and a 38-mile range. Its integrated pannier rack offers 100 lbs. of hauling capacity. Wide rugged tires and a front suspension fork provide a smooth, comfortable ride over challenging terrain, while the SRAM 7-speed gearing and Tektro 2-Piston Hydraulic Disc brakes ensure precise control and reliable stopping power. Customizable options include trailers, storage solutions, additional lighting and gear holders. The bike's LCD display and five modes of pedal assist, throttle and walk-assist mode offer versatility.



MTM CASE-GARD

(937) 890-7461
mtmcase-gard.com

Crafted from high-impact, injection-molded polypropylene, MTM Case-Gard's **SUPPRESSOR CASE** is built to withstand rugged handling. Its ergonomic handle and strong, snap-tight latches enhance both comfort and security during transport. The case's robust mechanical hinge, paired with two integrated padlock points, ensures a secure closure, preventing unintended opening. Inside, high-quality foam padding keeps suppressors firmly in place, while additional storage space is available beneath the padding. The Case is available in Dark Earth color. The exterior dimensions are 13.1" x 9.7" x 3.2".



XS SIGHTS

(888) 744-4880
xssights.com

XS Sights now offers **LINE EXTENSIONS FOR SMITH & WESSON, COLT AND TAURUS REVOLVERS**. For the Smith & Wesson J-Frame: XS Standard Dot with pre-drilled white or brass front sight. For K- and L-Frame (.38/.357) and L-Frame (.44): XS Minimalist sights with pre-drilled white or brass front sight. For Colt Cobra, King Cobra and Viper revolvers: XS Standard Dot with easy-to-install white or brass front sight. Lastly, for Taurus 856/605: XS Standard Dot with pre-drilled brass front sight.



TTF 12 T300MA1

TOKAREV USA

(865) 604-6894
tokarevusa.com

Tokarev USA, a division of SDS Arms, introduces the **TTF 12 T300A1** and **T300MA1** shotgun with a dual piston, self-regulating gas system. The semiautomatic 12-GA shotgun accepts Benelli Mobil Chokes and features a Picatinny rail sight mount and a green fiber optic front sight. It has a black synthetic buttstock and forend and is offered with a nickel-anodized or black-anodized aluminum finish. Capacity is four plus one, with a plus-one magazine extension included. OAL is 38", barrel length is 18.5" and it weighs 6.1 lbs.



BEAR CREEK ARSENAL

(919) 439-8133
bearcreekarsenal.com

Bolt-action AR-10 uppers and rifles from Bear Creek Arsenal are offered in .308 Win., 6.5 Creedmoor, .243 Win., 8.6 Blackout and .22-250. The **AR-10 COMPLETE UPPER** has a 20" Parkerized heavy barrel and features a 1:8" twist rate. It includes the new 15" M-LOK split rail, an M4 flat-top billet upper receiver, a BCA Bolt Carrier Group, a flash hider and a right-side, bolt-action-style charger handle. Lengths range from 15" to 24". The bolt-action-style can be shipped to every state except NJ.



WILEY X

(800) 776-7842
wileyx.com

From Wiley X, **AXE** and **APEX** (pictured) frames feature shatterproof Selenite 6-Base lenses and are equipped with WX CAPTIVATE lens technology (available in polarized and non-polarized options) for superior clarity, enhanced contrast and vivid colors. The Axe and Apex offer an ultralight, long-lasting frame built with impact-resistant lenses, hydrophilic rubber nose pads, temple tips and hand-brushed stainless steel temples. Additionally, both models are available with prescription lenses using the brand's proprietary Digiforce2 technology. Each model comes with removable side shields. With side shields installed, the Axe and Apex meet both ANSI Z87.1+ and EN.166 safety standards.

NEW PRODUCTS

GOVIEW

goview-us.com

GOVIEW introduces **ZOOMR 10X3** general observation binoculars. Features of the binoculars include magnesium housing, fully multicoated lenses, nitrogen filled, diopter adjustment and aluminum spacer, short hinge design, large field of view and light weight. The ZOOMR 10X34 is offered in five colors: Miami Blue (pictured), Sunset Orange, Light Brown, Ruby Red and Phantom Black.



PHLSTER HOLSTERS

phlsterholsters.com

PHLster announced a refresh to its **ENIGMA** holster system. The faceplate is now injection-molded from a high-strength polymer for increased durability. Users will notice smoother edges, providing a more comfortable draw. A subtle 3D pattern improves traction against clothing and helps garments stay in place for better concealment and stability. A small segment of elastic has been added to the leg leash, ensuring it remains snug, and a more secure snap buckle and streamlined quick-adjust sliders make setup and adjustment faster and easier. An additional leash is included for use as a leg leash or optional supportive "garter."

GARMIN

(800) 800-1020
garmin.com

The **TACTIX 8** smartwatch from Garmin is available in a 47mm or 51mm case. Features include MIL-STD-810 construction for thermal, shock and water resistance and a 40-meter dive rating with leakproof buttons. The new 47mm AMOLED display offers up to 16 days of battery life in smartwatch mode, while the 51mm solar model with an always-on display offers up to 48 days. The activity profile allows users to input pack weight to better understand the physical exertion associated with rucking. In addition, a new pack weight feature allows users to add pack weight to various activities like trail running, hiking and walking, which disables VO2 Max recording when carrying 2kg or more. All tactix 8 units come preloaded with Applied Ballistics Ultralight solver and are compatible with the new AB Quantum app. Users can view terrain contours on TopoActive maps for a better understanding of terrain.



TOPS KNIVES

(208) 542-0113
topsknives.com

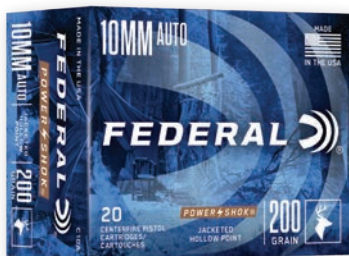
Designed by Leo Espinoza, the **EL CHETE MINI** from TOPS Knives measures 8.75" long and has a 5.5" Wharncliffe blade. The blade is finished in Midnight Bronze and sports a green canvas Micarta handle. It arrives with a Kydex sheath and belt loop clip and weighs 5.4 oz. (7.5 oz. with sheath).



PRECISION ARMAMENT

(585) 593-4975
precisionarmament.com

The **ACCUWASHER GEN 2 MUZZLE DEVICE ALIGNMENT SYSTEM** from Precision Armament delivers precise muzzle device alignment with single-shim accuracy and expands compatibility to all common thread sizes and barrel profiles with new adapters that allow users to size up for a seamless connection. It is crafted with a chamfered side to allow clearance for barrels with radiused thread shoulders. Three optimized sizes are available: 1/2" (0.725" OD), 5/8" (0.825" OD) and 3/4" (0.925" OD) for a tailored fit.



FEDERAL AMMUNITION

(800) 379-1732
federalpremium.com

Federal Ammunition added a 10mm Auto, 200-grain jacketed soft point (JSP) load to its **HANDGUN HUNTING POWER-SHOK** ammunition product line. The load is ideal for those seeking an accurate and terminally effective bullet suitable for a variety of big game when hunting with a handgun. This hunting handgun load features clean-burning powders, reliable Federal primers, reloadable brass cases and quality, accurate jacketed hollowpoint bullets suited to a variety of big game. It is sold in 20-count boxes.



MONTANA RIFLE COMPANY

(810) 392-2183
montanarifleco.com

From Montana Rifle Co., and in collaboration with Shoot2Hunt, the **MARSHALL HUNTING RIFLE** features Adaptive Controlled Round Feed, a three-position safety and a stainless barreled action with Cerakote elite series finish. Additional specs include an Unknown Munitions Time three-port muzzlebrake, Rokstok Trinity Rail (ARCA/Picatinny/Spartan compatible), Unknown Munitions AICS bottom metal with ambidextrous release, an MDT AICS three-round flush fit polymer and five-round metal, and a custom Rokstok. The Marshall Hunting Rifle is available in 6.5 Creedmoor, .308 Win., 6.5 PRC, 6 Creedmoor and .22 Creedmoor.



WEATHERBY INC.

(307) 675-7840
weatherby.com

Weatherby announced the return of the **MARK V DELUXE VARMINTMASTER**, a modernized take on Roy Weatherby's legendary small-caliber hunting rifle. It retains the signature Monte Carlo AA-grade walnut stock with a high-gloss finish, diamond-point checkering and distinctive rosewood forend and grip cap. The barrel now features a threaded muzzle for brakes or suppressors and an updated 1:8" twist rate, allowing shooters to stabilize heavier bullets like the 80.5-grain Berger FBT for increased long-range performance. It is available in .224 WBY Magnum and .22-250. Weatherby has also brought back .224 WBY Magnum ammunition, handloaded at the company's Sheridan, Wyo. facility.



WILSON COMBAT

(800) 955-4856
wilsoncombat.com

QUELL P and **QUELL P-S** suppressors from Wilson Combat are precision-engineered for semi-auto 9mm pistols and built for tactical, defensive and recreational shooting. Constructed from 7075 aluminum with an ultra-durable hard coat anodized finish, they provide an increase in sound reduction without excess weight. The **QUELL P** has a seven-baffle system delivering 34 dB sound reduction in a 6.25", 9.5-oz. package, while the four-baffle **QUELL P-S** (short variant) offers a compact, lightweight option with 25 dB reduction at 4.875" and 8 oz.

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BEST PRACTICES

Continued from p. 23

"If they buy a silencer from someone else, are they going to keep going to that dealer? Have you potentially just lost that customer?" Maddox asked.

Historically, some of the biggest barriers to suppressor sales were the paperwork and storage demands. But times have changed.

Most suppressor companies and distributors like Silencer Central and Silencer Shop offer education and guidance and often provide their own systems to help with the paperwork.

Storage issues have also been drastically improved. A few years ago, if you were heavily active in suppressor sales, you could find yourself with 100 or more suppressors sitting in your safe awaiting tax stamps, said Morrow with HUXWRX.

"Now it might be a couple dozen or less because the turnaround times are so much better," Maddox said.

One bit of advice: If you do decide to dip a toe into suppressor sales, put one staffer in charge of them.

"Pick one person and make him or her the expert, and let them execute it," Maddox advised.



SilencerCo S98



WHAT ABOUT THE HEARING PROTECTION ACT?

It's hard to talk about suppressors without taking a little trip down memory lane — back to 2017 and the failed effort to remove suppressors from the scope of the National Firearms Act. The so-called Hearing Protection Act attracted some initial Congressional support, but eventually floundered.

Could it be revived?

In some ways, a serious revival could actually serve to dampen suppressor sales — at least while the measure works its way through Congress. It's essentially what happened in 2017, when gun owners were optimistic about passage. Many of them put off purchases while

waiting to see how things played out. Why pay \$200 for a tax stamp if you think there's a chance tax stamps will go away?

For now, at least, the industry remains pessimistic about the potential for lightening or eliminating regulations on suppressors.

"Our response has been it's going to be very difficult to get 60 U.S. senators to agree on anything," said Maddox, with Silencer Central. **SI**

Dealers, what are your thoughts on suppressors? Like shooting a suppressed firearm, we want to "hear" what you have to say! comments@shootingindustry.com

Continued from p. 46

actors and comedians to participate. He recognizes the support the Light Foundation has received from the industry over the past 20 years has been essential to furthering its impact.

“We’ve been blessed to have the industry support and back us over the years; it’s amazing how much weight these companies have. It often goes unnoticed,” he said. “There’s this perception by those who are uninformed and their perception limits the greater conversation — which is the impact the industry has across the board when it comes to helping out nonprofits and communities.”

But, Light contends, our industry doesn’t do a good enough job telling its own story to the masses. (This month marks my 12th year involved with *SI*, and I agree with Light’s assertion: We’re good at preaching to the choir, but we need to look for new opportunities to connect with those who may not agree with our industry.)

“

There are scores of other events held across the country throughout the year — but we don’t often hear about them ahead of time.

Light’s point: “Too often, when the industry tries to have a bigger conversation with the general public, other voices will drown out the realities — the good work and the impact this industry has. That’s why I’ve always asked supporters at these events to not be afraid and speak the truth.”

REACHING NEW AUDIENCES

One of the things that makes our industry unique over others is the camaraderie competitors share together. It helps further the sport to new audiences at events like the Shoot-Out,



Last May, the Light Foundation hosted its ninth annual Leadership Conference, which was held at Bridgewater State University in Massachusetts. Students from seven local high schools participated in the all-day event, with a focus on the theme, *Make It Matter*.

where participants can interact with numerous brands. (Not unlike Kevin’s Game Fair, profiled in this month’s “Summertime Sales” feature.)

“One of the big trends we’ve seen is how our vendor tent has grown over the years, with several gun companies participating — like Smith & Wesson, Ruger, SIG SAUER, Savage and Kimber. They’re going to have their representatives participating, who are very skilled on the product and sales side, and they’re engaging with our audience — which is a mixture of corporate, charitable-minded people who aren’t necessarily their target customer,” Light shared.

The growth of first-time gun buyers over the past few years has certainly helped.

“It’s not often a first-time gun owner gets to talk to a brand and learn more. They’re interested in what’s out there, and if they attend an event like this, they have the opportunity to talk with a manufacturer and ask questions like, ‘Why would I carry that revolver versus this one’ and so on,” he stated.

With The Buckeye Blast taking place some 750 miles from Burrillville, R.I., vendors will have opportunities for fresh connections.

“I think we’re going to see the

vendor tent continue to grow, as our partners find ways to have those organic conversations at an event like the Shoot-Out or The Buckeye Blast,” Light noted.

SUPPORTING A CAUSE? LET US KNOW!

Kudos to the Light Foundation and Black Wing Shooting Center for staging this event. (For more info on the Light Foundation or The Buckeye Blast, visit matlight72.com.) We know there are scores of other events held across the country throughout the year — but we don’t often hear about them ahead of time.

So, I have an invitation: Whether you’re a dealer, distributor, manufacturer or another related business in the shooting, hunting and outdoor industry and you’re putting on an event to benefit a cause or your local community (or contributing to one), I want to hear about it and share your stories of “good citizenship” with readers.

There are rich traditions involved in hunting and the shooting sports, and if we can introduce it to emerging generations and demographics, it will provide long-term growth, stability and opportunity for all businesses in our space. I look forward to hearing from you: editor@shootingindustry.com. **SI**

INDUSTRY LINK



BY JADE MOLDAE

SHINING A LIGHT ON “GOOD CITIZENSHIP”

Before he was tasked with protecting Tom Brady from marauding pass rushers and becoming a three-time Super Bowl champion in his storied football career, Matt Light was an outdoorsman who grew up in rural Ohio with a passion for hunting and the shooting sports.

Early on in his 11-year tenure with the New England Patriots, Light endeavored to use his platform as a professional athlete to serve others. Light and his wife, Susie, launched the Light Foundation together in 2001, his rookie season.

The Light Foundation's mission is to “take young people out of their everyday environments and provide them with unique opportunities that ignite their passion, purpose, and motivation to succeed.” The foundation serves 7,500 young people each year, offering numerous programs designed to get first graders up to high school seniors outdoors and experience hands-on learning. They offer a leadership academy, timber-frame leadership camp, turkey hunts and more.

“I was lucky before I knew what luck was; I grew up in a family where the outdoors reigned supreme,” Light said. “It played such a key part in my life, and to have the opportunity to introduce kids of all ages to this lifestyle has been the coolest thing in the world to see. This industry, the shooting sports world, has been the driving force of what we do.”

FORMAT HEADS TO MIDWEST

Like any nonprofit, it takes fundraising to develop programs — and the Light Foundation's expansive initiatives are supported by several fundraising events throughout the year.

The banner event, though, is one built on support from our industry: the Matt Light Celebrity Shoot-Out, which celebrated its 20th year last September at Addieville East Farm in Burrillville, R.I. The 2024 event attracted more than 500 attendees and raised over \$1 million for the Light Foundation, its most ever.

Buoyed by the success of this annual event, Light revealed the concept will be replicated in his home state at a facility frequently mentioned in *Shooting Industry* (including this very issue, in fact): Black Wing Shooting Center in Delaware, Ohio.

Dubbed “The Buckeye Blast,” this inaugural event will follow the very successful formula of the Matt Light Celebrity Shoot-Outs format later this month (May 13). Light is confident this event will be an immediate success.

“We have 20 years of experience hosting people, and our in-house team does a fantastic job — whether it's working with kids, setting up tables or getting a parking lot set up — they know how to get it done well,” he said.

Light's team selected a capable partner, as Black Wing is an NSSF Five-Star Range, boasting both indoor and outdoor facilities, and has experience

◀ For 25 years, Matt Light (far left) has used his platform as a three-time Super Bowl winner to introduce young people to the joys of the outdoors and the shooting sports through the Light Foundation.

hosting large-scale events, such as Ohio Suppressor Fest (held for the first time last year, and returning June 21).

To get a feel for what he was trying to replicate in the Midwest, Light invited Joe King, Black Wing range and training manager, to attend the 2024 Shoot-Out.

“From there, we've been able to start putting the pieces together and I think in year one for The Buckeye Blast, we're going to blow away what we did for few years for the Celebrity Shoot-Out in Rhode Island,” Light predicted.



To have the opportunity to introduce kids of all ages to this lifestyle has been the coolest thing in the world to see. This industry, the shooting sports world, has been the driving force of what we do.”

Matt Light • Co-Founder
Light Foundation

A SUCCESSFUL FORMULA

One of the secrets to the Shoot-Out's success is how participants (grouped in foursomes) and celebrities mingle together, Light said.

“We have foursomes set up — who are often great friends, coworkers or clients — and they shoot each shotgun stage clockwise, while the celebrities shoot counterclockwise,” he said. “This gives an opportunity for everyone to mingle together while enjoying some friendly competition at a charity event.”

During a time when many celebrities shun the firearms industry, Light has encouraged fellow athletes,

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