

## ED COOK HUSHPOWER .410 REVIEW



This season there's been a phenomenal number of rabbits around, in fact, the most I've ever seen. Where I'm based in Hampshire for the last few months all I've seen is rabbits, rabbits and more rabbits. I even see the damn things in my sleep!

From an early age I've always made the effort to try and learn a new method of rabbit control each year - and then spent as much time as possible trying to perfect it, thankfully with the help of some first class tutors.

As an example, in more recent years we've been using the moderated shotgun and quad combination whilst lamping - which has proved amazingly successful for rabbit control.

The quad was added to our array of equipment some years ago, but in those days we used unmoderated shotguns when lamping. (I admit I wasn't pinning my hopes too high on this arrangement initially, although I could understand some merits of the quad over a 4x4 truck.)

It took several outings with me driving/lamping and brother Nathan shooting for us to get used to the arrangement, but the important thing was that it not only worked but worked exceedingly well. After a season of lamping like this we had culled a few thousand rabbits with this method but the noise of the shotguns bothered me. I know only too well how rabbits can become 'a bit spooky' at the noise of a shotgun ringing across the countryside at night, and those bunnies in my neck of the woods soon started getting jumpy.

The point was hammered home to me one night when we sat up a high-seat, shooting rabbits with a moderated .22 rimfire rifle fitted with a night vision scope.

As usual we had told the farmer our plans, the only complication being that the fanner's son was also going out that night with a (unmoderated) shotgun. Thankfully the lad had agreed not to come near our high seat but to keep his shooting to the other side of the 2,000-acre estate.

Soon after dark we were in place and it wasn't long before we had shot around 20 or so rabbits. It wasn't long, though, before some shots started to echo across from the other side of the estate. The rabbits, obviously also hearing the shots from the 12-bore, suddenly left the crop on which they were feeding and fled for the safety of a dense hedge.

This was all the proof I needed to confirm my thoughts - a moderated shotgun might make a massive difference when lamping.

Following on from this a few years ago we started using a moderated .410 from the quad when lamping, but by way of an experiment we'd use unmoderated shotguns on alternate nights to see if there really was a difference.

When we were shooting a 12-bore without a moderator (on an average sized farm with a fair amount of rabbits) we'd usually shoot around 50. However, if we were using the moderated .410 we would double the bag at least, even if the weather was poor for lamping.

You may think 'well that's an obvious result,' simply because we're using a moderated gun. Not necessarily so. For a start you have to remember that there's 50 or so less rabbits to shoot at on the following night, many of these will be lamp shy, and the mighty hut greatly underestimated .410 has a lot less lead being 'thrown' out the end of the barrel.

The .410 we use is a pump action Mossberg, which has been moderated by Hushpower. Depending on where it's fired (out in the fields, say, or close to farm buildings) it's usually only slightly louder than an unmoderated air rifle!

When we first started using it we tried various makes of cartridges but eventually settled on the 21/2in 14g Lyalvale Express shell. We found these much better than any other make and they suited our needs perfectly

The beauty of using a fast 650cc powered quad and a moderated shot-gun is that you have the acceleration to cut off even the most lamp shy of rabbits, and then deliver the greatly muffled shot. Not only is the quad incredibly manoeuvrable (you can 'turn on a sixpence') it doesn't leave 'wheelings' all over the place, which can happen when shooting off a truck especially if the ground is wet. You can also cover more ground on the quad in a night because it's so nippy. This obviously means more shooting opportunities. This season alone we have killed over 5,000 rabbits with this combination/method, and by the time our lamping season draws to an end this figure will have doubled.

I prefer the moderated .410 to the other bore sizes available from Hushpower, purely because it suits my needs. I don't need a 12-bore as most of my shots are at close range, normally well under 40 yards. It also means that I have a saleable product at the end of the night and not just masses of 'fox bait' or 'ferret food'!

Whilst these guns are not 'best English' by any means, they're reliable, lethal and quite cheap - even though they do look like a 'drainpipe with a trigger.'

An additional benefit for these guns - on top of not disturbing your quarry is that you are much less likely to get a visit from the police following a complaint about the noise.

I'm sure many of us have had our nocturnal shooting activities interrupted at some time or other as a result of someone's phone call to the Law. In my experience the call is usually made by some newly self titled 'country person' that works in the 'smog,' buys a house in the countryside, gets a wax jacket, a pair of wellies and a Labrador called Jasper or Willow.

Sometimes, despite such people's desperate attempt to 'fit in' with their new surroundings, they are often not very understanding about the management of pests.

As a result, these super quiet shotguns help keep these idiots off my back - a definite case of 'hear no evil.' Some doubters of these guns could argue, 'why not use a moderated .22 rimfire?'

Well there are good reasons. For starters, I don't have to worry about 'the horses over there' or have ricochet concerns because 'there's a motorway the other side of the field.' Also you can shoot running rabbits if they're lamp shy - even in multiples (remember high capacity shotguns are available if you've got a FAC licence). We've had a couple of memorable nights on a farm we had just taken on because it had 'a fair few rabbits!'

Our first night out at this new location was still and not great for lamping - rabbits travel further and 'sit' better if it's windy We still managed to bag 246, however, even though they hadn't yet cut all the fields.

We deemed the first visit a bit of a result, and certainly not had for two-and-a-half hour's work! The farm is just over 1,000 acres but rabbits were everywhere.

After that successful visit, Nathan and I discussed what we might shoot when all the fields had been harvested. We wondered if we could beat our personal record for lamping, 253 rabbits with the I Hushpower and quad.

We were both confident we could break the record, but I'd need to enlist someone to help with the gutting as I didn't want to waste valuable lamping time. Enter good mate, David Blogg - he's a star! When a suitable night arrived we loaded the gear and quad onto the trailer and set off to the farm. We arrived as darkness fell, stuffed the quad with enough ammo to take on the Taliban, grabbed the .410 and lamp and we were off.

It wasn't long before we started reducing the rabbit population one by one, and we soon filled the first tray full. (The large tray on the back of the quad holds up to 80 full grown rabbits and the smaller tray on the front is for cartridges and cans of Red Bull.)

We systematically worked around each field, frequently returning to our 'drop-off point' for the rabbits to be gutted by David. It wasn't long before the pile of rabbits had become some-thing of a furry mountain!

As dawn broke we decided to call it a night. The grand total was 521- not had for a .410 'kids gun.' I've lamped rabbits by every means possible, including dog, hawk, air rifle, catapult, rifle and shotgun, but this combination is the best by far.

Nathan once took an American visitor lamping on the quad with this .410 and the guy shot 145 rabbits in two hours. His comment was "god damn, this is better than sex." What more can I say!

