

THIS IS NOT YOUR FATHER'S MOSSBERG

BY GREG RODRIGUEZ



4x4
BOLT ACTION

THE HERD OF PRONGHORNS

was nothing more than a haphazard collection of white specs on the horizon when I left the truck on that frosty, Wyoming morning. I wouldn't normally chance such a long stalk with so many eyes watching, but the odd buck with the forward raking horns we christened "Funny Boy" caught my fancy earlier in the hunt.

I've killed bigger pronghorns, but I love unusual racks, and Funny Boy's certainly fit the bill. Fortunately, a convenient coulee offered enough cover to help us stay out of sight while working my way into range.

When at last we made it to the end of the coulee and I peeked over the edge, I was rewarded with the sight of the herd feeding placidly, oblivious to our presence. Unfortunately, I still had to crawl 50 yards to gain enough elevation to clear the scraggly sage that grew so thick around the drainage.

I crawled slowly, inch-by-inch, pushing my pack and rifle in front of me in hopes of gaining the few inches of precious elevation I needed to make a clean shot. With hundreds of eyes to fool, it took nearly an hour to cover those 50 yards, but when I finally rested my gun on my pack and pulled out my range finder, Funny Boy was still there.

The shot was only 255 yards, but as often happens when hunting herd animals, I had to wait an eternity for a safe shot. When the buck finally stepped clear of the surrounding does, I plastered the reticle squarely on its shoulder and touched the trigger. At the shot, Funny Boy – the first animal to fall to Mossberg's new 4x4 rifle — flopped over on its back, deadlier than dollar gas.



Above: Finding the right buck and getting within range can be tough with nimble footed pronghorn. Below: The author and "Funny Boy", the unusual buck taken with the new 4x4 rifle.

FUTURISTIC STYLING

was the first thing I noticed about this newest Mossberg. The stock was nicely figured, but the gun's overall appearance was more noticeable for its stylish lines and vented forend. Other noticeable stock features include a scalloped butt stock and unique cheek piece, which can best be described as Mossberg's 21st century interpretation of a Monte Carlo. The synthetic-stocked version adds a skeletonized butt stock, offering an even 'cooler' look. The 4x4's action is similar to that of Mossberg's 100 ATR, but the bolt face has been opened to accommodate three new magnum offerings (7mm Rem. Mag, .300 Win. Mag., and .338 Win. Mag.). The primary difference is a flush-fit, detachable polymer magazine (photo at right) that holds four rounds in standard calibers and three for belted magnums. With box magazines typically being associated with 'expensive', this is a nice touch.

Like the ATR, the 4x4 features a free-floated, button-rifled barrel with a recessed crown, but with these new magnum chamberings, it's 24" long, with rifle sight models coming in at 22". And, to help take the guesswork out of mounting a scope, factory-installed Weaver-style scope bases are standard with all non-rifle sight models.



Having a stable rest is critical, with shots averaging 300+ yards. The author made use of his pack to take a single, well-placed shot at 255 yards.



4x4™ Rifle - Scoped Combo
 .300 Win. Mag., 24" Barrel, Matte Blue finish,
 Laminate Stock, 3-9x40mm Variable Scope

4x4™ Rifle - Scoped Combo
 .270 Win., 24" Barrel, Marinecote™ finish,
 Laminate Stock, 3-9x40mm Variable Scope

4x4™ Rifle
 .30-06 Sprg., 22" Barrel, Matte Blue finish,
 Walnut Stock, Rifle Sights

4x4™ Rifle
 7mm Rem. Mag., 24" Barrel, Matte Blue finish,
 Black Synthetic Stock

4x4™ Rifle
 .25-06 Rem., 24" Barrel, Marinecote™ finish,
 Black Synthetic Stock



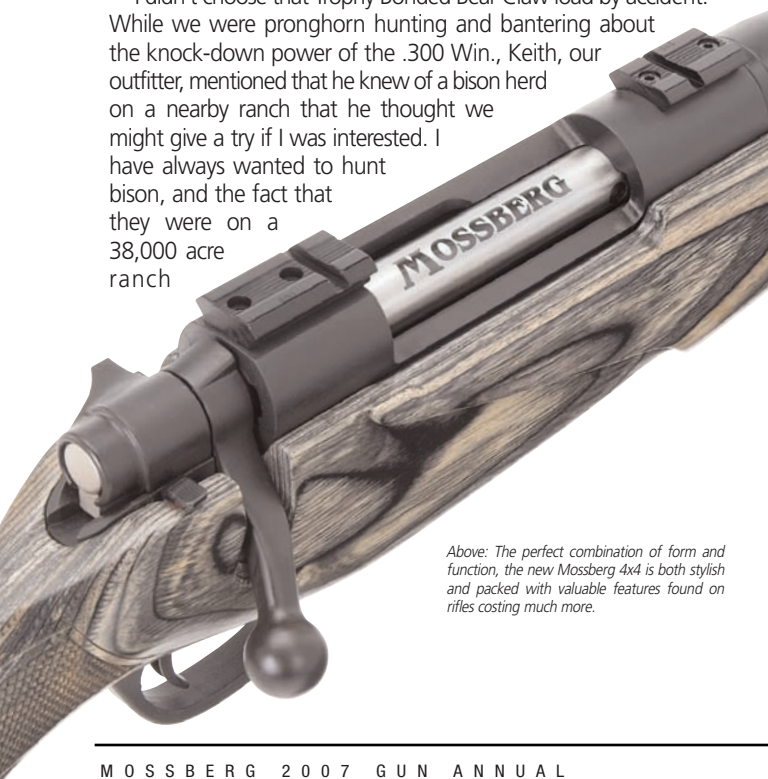
NOT ONE TO SIT AROUND,

I wanted to do more with the test rifle, so after getting our pronghorns to the skinning shed, I spent a few hours with it on the outfitter's shooting range. I started out by shooting steel targets at 250 yards from a variety of positions. The first thing that stood out was how good the stock felt. Mossberg's marketing and engineering folks clearly put a great deal of thought into the design, as it does a great job of attenuating recoil, and was comfortable to shoot from the bench and from field positions. And even though it was a prototype, the detachable box magazine fed perfectly, regardless of how fast (or slow) I worked the bolt.

Once I got a feel for the gun, I headed to the bench. First, I fired three groups with the last nine rounds from the box of 180 grain Winchester Power Points I hunted with. My groups averaged just over an inch—impressive, but I had a feeling that it could do even better.

Next, I tried Federal's 150 grain Trophy Bonded Bear Claw load. Given that we were in the middle of nowhere, I did not have a wide assortment of ammunition to test, and would probably not have chosen that particular load for accuracy testing if I did, but it produced several one-inch groups—not bad for a bullet that was designed for penetration rather than accuracy.

I didn't choose that Trophy Bonded Bear Claw load by accident. While we were pronghorn hunting and bantering about the knock-down power of the .300 Win., Keith, our outfitter, mentioned that he knew of a bison herd on a nearby ranch that he thought we might give a try if I was interested. I have always wanted to hunt bison, and the fact that they were on a 38,000 acre ranch



Above: The perfect combination of form and function, the new Mossberg 4x4 is both stylish and packed with valuable features found on rifles costing much more.





Left: The author took this fine bull in the shadow of the Devil's Tower with the new Mossberg 4x4 rifle. Below: Thankfully, a small group of pines kept the enormous bison from rolling all the way down the cliff's edge.



less than an hour away was all that I needed to hear. If things went right, I reasoned, I was going to need the bone-crushing penetration only a bonded bullet like the Trophy Bonded can deliver.

TATONKA TESTED

The next morning we searched high and low for one of several bison herds that roam the large, working cattle ranch. We had no luck, so we started searching water holes and stock tanks for fresh tracks. On the fourth stop we found what we were looking for, and the hunt was on.

We didn't walk far before we caught up to the herd. Now it was just a matter of finding a really good bull, which didn't take long. When I wiggled to within 60 yards, I leaned against a tree and waited for the bull to step clear of the herd. A young cow

halted my trigger squeeze several times, but when the bull finally offered a shot, I drove a 150 grain slug through its shoulder.

The bull buckled, but knowing how tough bison are, I wasted no time before sending a second bullet into its boiler room. Before I could fire a third, the bull disappeared into the herd.

We waited a few minutes before following the monster bull, but we were pretty sure it was down for good. It was down all right...way down. Evidently, the smell of blood excited the other bulls, which ganged up on my bison, goring it savagely until they knocked it to the bottom of the hill.

Fortunately, a giant pine stopped its fall just short of disappearing off the cliff's edge. Getting the beast off of the mountain side was a feat within itself, but we were all smiles a few hours later, savoring the moment and taking in some of nature's finest creations.

A GREAT GUN AT ANY PRICE. Although my initial test was short, I was impressed with Mossberg's new 4x4 rifle. It was accurate, reliable, and damn good-looking. I can't help but think the production version will only be better. And with a street price in the \$300+ range, we're talking one helluva value. In fact, this Mossberg 4x4 is a helluva gun at any price! ■

Mossberg 4x4 Centerfire Rifle Specs at a Glance

Type	Bolt-action Centerfire rifle
Caliber	.25-06 Rem, .270 Win., .30-06 Sprg., 7mm Rem Mag., .300 Win Mag., .338 Win Mag.
Barrel	24" in mag and non-mag calibers, 22" rifle sight models only
Mag. Capacity	Detachable box magazine. 3 rounds in magnum calibers; 4 rounds in standard calibers
Safety	Two position
Stock	American black walnut; Deluxe Laminate; Skeletonized Black Synthetic
Metal Finish	Matte blue; Marinecote

