



By John Kiriakidis

CZ 512 Semi-Auto .22 LR

It's well known that I'm a Ruger 10/22 fan and I'm yet to find another product that gives the reliability or accuracy this autoloader does. Admittedly, you do have to spend a bit of extra cash on aftermarket products to fine tune the 10/22 into something that is really special.

However, sometimes you pick a rifle up and you don't want to put it down. Well the CZ 512 is one of those and, after playing with this new semi-auto, that 10/22 love affair could well be coming to an abrupt end.

CZ rifles, (full name, Česká zbrojovka, more commonly recognised in NZ as "Brno"), are made in Czech Republic. They have been manufacturing sporting and hunting firearms since 1936 and are regarded as one of the better European manufacturers. Not surprisingly, they have similar reputation in NZ; the CZ 512 will only enhance it.

Like a lot of European styled guns, the CZ 512 is a good looking rifle and comes with a blued hammer forged barrel and nicely shaped lacquered wooded (beech) fore and rear stocks. I don't believe having a blued barrel is a problem when hunting rabbits, as 99% of the time you're hunting in dry conditions. The need for the traditional NZ deer stainless / plastic combo isn't required, so you can spoil yourself by buying something that looks and feels great.

As the NZ distributors are Kilwell NZ Ltd, the version I received to Testfire was fitted with a 4x32 Huntsman scope, a suitable rabbit set up. As mentioned, the barrel is hammer forged and blued. At 525mm it is slightly longer than that of a 10/22. It is fitted with

Inset Top: Fore stock showing the quality of manufacture and design. Inset Centre: room to easily access the trigger and hammer. Inset Bottom: Here is a very clever design, slide the top receiver off and all is exposed for maintenance. Right: The elegant lines of a quality semi auto.





Having few parts, the CZ 512 is easy to break down in the field.

This was probably the hardest review I have done to date. I've tried to make these reviews relatively balanced, with positive and negative comments but in this case I can honestly say that I've struggled to find a fault with the CZ 512

fixed sights, with the rear sight being adjustable for windage and elevation and factory set at 50m. The fore-sight has a removable cover to reduce glare. The barrel doesn't come threaded for a silencer, but given the length of the barrel, I would prefer to use a plastic over-barrel version in any case as it doesn't add any extra length or alter the balance of the rifle. However if desired you can buy threaded adaptors which are easily fitted without the need for costly gunsmithing.

The fore and rear stocks are really well shaped and properly lacquered. The rear stock drops slightly and has a nice pistol grip while the fore stock is machined so that it has a flat surface on the bottom. This fits into the palm of your hand with the sides indented to accommodate your fingers and thumb. The CZ 512 comes standard with sling mounts fitted.

The receiver set up is clever. To reduce weight it is made in two sections. The top is machined out of a steel billet with the barrel fitted and an 11mm dovetail machined into the top for mounting your scope. The bottom section is made from a tough polymer material and houses the trigger and magazine.

What I really like is that once you've unscrewed and removed the fore stock, you simply push out the single pin at the front of the receiver and the top slides away from the bottom. No springs to explode on you or the requirement to have 13 fingers; just punch the pin, slide apart until the bolt handle reaches a designed hole, pull that out and there you have it. The bolt, although operating when fired within the metal receiver housing, sits nice and snug on top of the polymer base when opened. This allows fantastic access for cleaning and you can easily push a standard cleaning rod in from the breech. An added bonus is that as the scope is mounted on to the receiver casing along with the barrel, you don't have to sight it in after it's been cleaned.

The bolt is a light-weight version and just about half the weight of a 10/22 bolt. It's also driven by two return springs which give a



smooth and balanced cycle, unlike the 10/22 with its single spring mounted on the side and tendency to bottom out at the rear of the receiver. The bolt just lifts off for cleaning. A little care is needed however as the return springs are under tension but easy to handle.

When the bolt is removed, the trigger assembly is exposed. As mentioned I modified the trigger in my 10/22 and there isn't a lot of room to work in. With the CZ 512 you could have a party in the space allocated. The trigger is crisp and pulls at around 2lbs. It isn't user adjustable and I felt no need to. When engaged, the safety blocks the trigger and also the bolt from returning to cock the hammer.

Magazines are traditionally the Achilles heel with many .22 semi-autos, and this is the very reason the 10/22 has been so successful with its fabled rotary version. However, I have to say the polymer 5 round magazines on the CZ 512 performed beautifully. I fired 300 rounds of super and subsonic ammunition and didn't have a single malfunction. I didn't have any to test but you can also buy 10 round magazines made in polymer or in metal.

The 5 round magazine protrudes around 5mm when inserted; the 10 round versions would subsequently protrude further which isn't ideal but something that you'd get used to.

On the range

I used the two popular rabbit rounds to test the CZ 512: Kilwell's "Whisper" hollow point subsonic and "Cobra" copper plated supersonic .22LR cartridges.

The first thing you realise is that the CZ 512 is a pleasure to fire. It is nicely balanced and as a result when free-hand shooting you don't get the shakes. I set targets up at 50m and 80m, the normal distance that most bunnies are knocked over. The little Huntsman scope worked well at these ranges and being a no-fuss reticule scope it's ideal for shooting at night or early morning.

The cycling is very smooth and the second shot isn't adversely affected by the previous shot. With a nice clean rifle I fired the first 4 rounds of subsonic ammunition at 50m and managed to put a whole magazine into a 12mm group, pretty impressive. I then set the target at 80m and so as not to give a false impression and to also mimic what I do on a night shoot, I didn't clean the CZ 512



Left: The well designed polymer 5 shot magazine. Above: The well designed receiver, easy to clean and no need to re-sight after cleaning.



The CZ has a nicely crowned muzzle.

before firing 300 rounds over a period of an hour or so. I got the same consistency with both the super and sub rounds putting them into a 20mm grouping.

This would have given me the confidence to take a head shot every time, perfect for the pot. The CZ 512 also didn't malfunction once from a feeding or ejecting perspective, which was an excellent performance.

Conclusion

This was probably the hardest review I have done to date. I've tried to make these reviews relatively balanced, with positive and negative comments but in this case I can honestly say that I've struggled to find a fault with the CZ 512. As an off-the-shelf item, these are one of the best .22LR semi-auto's I've tested and after talking with the guys at Kilwell, it wasn't surprising to hear that they were just pouring out of the door.

After many a year I'm afraid to say that the divorce courts are pending, with the old 10/22 pushed aside and the new good looking CZ 512 moving in.



Value for Money Rating: 1 2 3 4 **5**

Optic Rating: 1 2 3 4 **5**

Performance Rating: 1 2 3 4 **5**



Top Left: Subsonic at 80M 20mm grouping dirty barrel after 300 rounds

Top Right: Subsonic at 50M 12mm grouping clean barrel

Left: Supersonic at 80M 20mm grouping dirty barrel after 300 rounds

Technical Data

Caliber	.22 LR; .22 WMR
Magazine Capacity	5
Stock	Beech
Twist rate	1:16
Trigger mechanism operation	non-adjustable
Fixed Sights	Adjustable rear, W&E
Overall length	1000 mm
Barrel length	525 mm
Height	200 mm
Width	57 mm
Weight	2,67 kg
Barrel	Blued - hammer forged
RRP	\$1200