



“This is minute of angle territory and a very good performance from a budget-priced out of the box rifle shooting factory cartridges.”

The detachable magazine is strongly constructed, feeds smoothly, and fits flush with the receiver.

The editor gets to shoot...

MOSSBERG'S NEW 4X4 HUNTING RIFLE —

Mossberg's new 4x4 is a full size rifle with a long (.30-06 length) action, that comes chambered in a choice of popular hunting calibres; .25-06, .270, 7mm Rem Mag, .30-06, .300 Win Mag, and .338 Win Mag. Our test rifle, supplied by the New Zealand importers, Kilwell Sports Ltd. in Rotorua, was a .270 model fitted with a Japanese made Shirstone 2-7x32 vari-power scope in alloy rings.

The rifle has a slim, free-floating 24" barrel tapering to a diameter of 20.7mm at the muzzle, with a matte black finish. The barrel is button rifled with a twist rate of one turn in 10", and the muzzle crown is recessed to protect it from knocks. The 4x4's overall length, from muzzle to the rear of the thick, solid, soft rubber butt pad is 44-3/8" (113mm approx), and the rifle's weight with the scope and rings comes to 8lb 8-1/4oz (3.86kgs).

Visually, the test rifle's most noticeable feature is its brown/black/grey laminated timber stock. The forestock area is generously slotted to let barrel heat escape, there's a sculptured area just above the magazine well, followed by a full pistol grip with an embossed synthetic cap, and a deeply contoured butt. The buttstock is hollowed out (ie; recessed) on each side, with a raised cheek piece. The cheekpiece is smaller than you'd find on a Monte-Carlo style stock, but I found it comfortable at the shoulder, and experienced no problems or discomfort with it while firing quite a long series of shots from a bench.

Sling swivel studs are installed, and there's a 1/4" black plastic spacer between the timber and the butt pad itself. The checkering on both the forestock and grip is neatly machine



The bolt release lever is located on the left rear of the action, with the two-position safety catch on the right.

cut and includes a stippled area near the base of the grip.

Overall, the stock is modern and quite striking to look at, and I think it works pretty well. I could carry this gun in the company of others, and hunt with it, without a qualm.

ADDITIONAL FEATURES

The 4x4 has a sturdy, flush fitting, five-shot (four rounds in Magnum calibres) detachable box magazine embossed with the Mossberg logo, that clips securely into the synthetic/

polymer magazine well. The magazine, which is made from the same synthetic material, is smooth to load and rattle-free, and releases via a single spring-loaded lever at the front. The lever is easy to reach with the fingertip, and because it is set into a slot in the stock it is protected from bumps and knocks – there's no way that the magazine can be released by accident, to drop free and be lost on the forest floor. The trigger guard too, is molded from the same tough synthetic material.

The combination of a coated,



laminated stock and synthetic fittings means that the Mossberg is about as weatherproof as a rifle can be, which should appeal to New Zealand hunters. I did note however, that when the rifle came out of the box its barrel already had a couple of scuff marks on it, which wiping with an oiled cloth failed to remove. This indicates that the Mossberg's standard metal surface finish may not be entirely durable, so it will need to be kept lubricated, but then, to a degree that applies to all firearms.

As an option, Mossberg does offer a "Marinecoat" finish, which might be the best way to go if you're the kind of hunter who gives his rifle a fairly hard time. There are also synthetic and walnut stock options as well (see below).

The 4x4's action itself is based on Mossberg's proven 100 ATR model, with a receiver machined from a solid block of bar steel. The bolt has two large locking lugs up front, and the right lug houses the extractor. A plunger-style ejector is located on the left side of the bolt face. There is also a prominent gas shield on the left side of the bolt which, along with the gas escape hole in the left of receiver, is designed to protect the shooter's face in the event of a ruptured case. The bolt has a 90-degree lift, but its slightly scalloped handle clears an average size scope easily. The action cocks on opening, and when it's cocked the silver coloured striker fits flush with the rear of the black-finished bolt shroud, where it is easily visible. With the action uncocked the striker disappears into the shroud – so it's not difficult for the shooter to determine the status of the rifle.

On my test rifle the bolt had slightly "new gun" feel to it, probably due to the presence of minor machining marks, but these should wear off with use. The bolt did in fact smooth up noticeably after just 20 or so rounds had been fired. A light polishing would complete the task.

Mossberg's goal was to produce a strong, reliable, but economically priced rifle, so the company hasn't wasted a lot of money on minor items like the safety or bolt release levers – they're both stamped from sheet steel and work just fine. The safety is a two-position type that does not lock the bolt, but it does snap on positively with an audible and tactile "click", and pushes forward to release almost



The tubular receiver is machined from bar steel and has a Remington style recoil lug.



The 4x4's bolt is a twin front locking lug design, and the magazine capacity is five rounds.



The bolt features an extractor housed in the right side lug, and a plunger-style ejector.





The recoil lug slots into this recess in the stock, which is epoxy-resined for additional strength.



The butt has a stippled area on the grip, a raised cheek piece, and a thick, solid recoil pad. Sling swivel studs are supplied too.

silently. There's no real need for a three-position safety catch when you've got a detachable magazine, because the rifle can be unloaded quickly and safely by opening the bolt and dropping the magazine out – you don't have to work the cartridges through the action.

The bolt release lever on the left of the receiver is similarly shaped – you simply

press it down and the bolt slips free.

The trigger is a single-stage unit, not designed to be adjustable by its owner, that on my test rifle released at 5-1/4lbs. Like the bolt, it would benefit from having its working surfaces polished by a gunsmith. I found that it had a very slight rearward movement, just a small fraction of an inch, before

firming up for that fairly hefty pull. These are not serious criticisms however, they're just observations. The somewhat heavy trigger did not detract from the excellent accuracy the 4x4 demonstrated when I actually got down to shooting it.

Before heading for the range however, I pulled the gun apart, appreciating as

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The forearm is free-floated, and ventilated to allow barrel heat to escape.

I did so the fact that the 4x4's action screws are allen-headed – gone are the days of those easily damaged slotted screws, the bane of guntesters the world over. It's so easy to slip with a flat screwdriver and chew up an over-tight screw – on a gun that belongs to someone else. That isn't going to happen with the Mossberg. With the gun disassembled I discovered that the recoil lug is a flat steel plate, similar in size and appearance to those found on Model 700 Remingtons, that is sandwiched between the barrel and the receiver, and butts into a corresponding slot in the stock. The surfaces of the slot are coated in epoxy resin to withstand recoil forces.

AT THE RANGE

At this point, with the rifle reassembled and the Shirstone scope bore-sighted, it was time to put some rounds through it. I headed off with three packets of factory .270 ammunition; 130 grain Winchester Silvertips, 150 grain Winchester Power-Points, and Federal Premiums loaded with 150 grain Sierra Gameking boat-tail soft-points. The Shirstone scope adjusted precisely and it took me just six sighters to get the point of impact pretty much centered on the bull at 50 yards, following which I settled down to shoot a series of three-shot groups.

The results were very pleasing – the majority of the groups measured less than a half-inch (12.5mm) and most of them were nicely shaped triangles. The rifle did not seem to have a preference for either bullet weight. The 150 grain groups overlapped, while the 130 grain groups went slightly high right, but that was it.

At 100 yards the groups were still tight with all three types of ammunition, the majority hovering just under the one-inch mark. This is minute of angle territory and a very good performance from a budget-priced out of the box rifle shooting factory cartridges.

Following my bench shooting sessions I checked out what overseas writers have had to say about the Mossberg 4x4's they've tested. To a man they've commented favourably



50 yard sighting-in groups. The 4x4 proved to be consistently accurate with both 130 and 150 grain factory ammunition.

about just how straight these rifles shoot. One tester, using a 4x4 chambered in .338 Win. Magnum, claimed it to be the most accurate rifle in that calibre he'd ever fired. So it seems that the performance of my test rifle was no fluke.

IN SUM

I can't find any fault with the 4x4. The rifle is well designed and constructed and functioned reliably. I liked the appearance and feel of the stock (which seemed to absorb a lot of the .270's felt recoil), the strong, easy loading/easy feeding detachable magazine, and the fact that the action can be single fed – just drop a round onto the magazine follower and it can be loaded straight into the breech. Most of all, the 4x4 landed all its bullets right were I aimed them!

If the rifle were mine I'd have a gunsmith lighten and tune the trigger, then head for the hills with confidence.

I should mention too, that all Mossberg 4x4's come standard with factory installed scope mounting blocks, plus a cable lock that goes through the action to prevent the bolt being fitted. Tony Dunn of Kilwell Sports advises that 4x4's are available in the following configurations:

Blued/synthetic stock	RRP \$899.00
Marinecote/synthetic stock	RRP \$999.00
Blued/laminated stock	RRP \$1199.00
Blued/walnut stock	RRP \$1199.00
Marinecote/laminated stock	RRP \$1299.00

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