



BLACK TO BASICS

George Stevens tries to tame the AirWolf Tactical prototype

It has to be said that, being asked to give your opinion on a rifle's development is always something of an honour, and when the invitation comes from a company like Daystate, it's doubly so. I've been asked to add my my views to the mix from which will emerge the new Daystate AirWolf Tactical, and this review is my way of involving the readers of Airgun World in that process. Basically, I'll give you, and Daystate, my best advice, and you are formally invited to do the same. I think it's a great idea, and while like all good companies, Daystate already pays close attention to the opinions of its customers, this time it wants to broaden the input to take in the Airgun World readership.

So, study what's on show here, then have a think about what you'd like to see done to it, get in touch with me, via the usual address and email of the mag', and I'll pass on everything to Daystate. That doesn't just apply to this rifle, by the way. In a conversation with Daystate's main man, Tony Belas, I suggested we may as well open the forum to include all of his company's products, and he agreed. Get those thinking caps on, set out your opinions, wish-lists and ideas, and I'll make sure they are delivered to the man who can make best use of them. Let's get started with an overview of the Wolf's setup, followed by a study of the prototype and what it offers the real world hunter.

The Air Wolf system

The Daystate Air Wolf is a pre-charged pneumatic which runs an autoload 10-shot, or single shot, electronic, computer-controlled, totally regulated action, where just about every feature and all types of performance, are metered, monitored and tailored to suit the shooter's requirements. From 'basics' such as telling you the number of shots

you've fired per session, through useful features like being able to reset your magazine shot count, all the way to how you'd prefer the backlight on the display screen to operate, this super-sporter has an electronic handle on it. There are nine modes in all, actioned by the trigger and clearly visible on the digital LCD screen, and should you wish to, you can keep an eye on the rifle's internal pressure, the shots left in the magazine, the amount of shots you've fired over a session, plus you can alert yourself to critical bottle

pressure, and when it's time to change the magazine. You can set the rifle's power, turn on/off the display screen's backlight, and also set the rifle to fire only once you've cycled the safety catch, which is also electronic.

This whole electronic, computerised deal campaigns under the banner of MAP or Map Compensated Technology, which is exactly what it says it is. The Wolf's electronics continually map (monitor) everything that's going on inside the rifle, and as it's doing so it compensates (adjusts) the firing mechanism and readouts to maintain perfect output and regulation. Now, let's go even lower on the techno' scale, to where I used to live until I grasped the MAP thing fully and understood what it does. I think this is important because there will be people out there who think, as I did, that an Air Wolf is too hi-tech for them to use, when I'm living proof

that it isn't. Essentially, the sensors in the Wolf detect that its internal air pressure has risen or fallen, and it adjusts the firing mechanism to make sure the rifle's output remains the same. Those adjustments may be tiny, but they count, and they wring out every ounce of performance from each charge of air. The rest of the MAP technology simply keeps you informed of what's happening. Take it from one who was all sorts of technophobic about Daystate's electronic rifles, if you can work a TV remote, you can use an Air Wolf.

efficient version of this Wolf did over 250 shots per charge in .177, so I'm not about to waste my life re-proving that this one will. Life's too short to shoot through an Air Wolf charge.

The barrel is 16.5 inches (420mm) long, completely shrouded in aluminium and tipped by Daystate's carbon fibre MKV Reflex silencer, which I was pleased to see doesn't make the Wolf unwieldy in any way. Also supplied will be a fully-padded hard case, made to Daystate's specification by Negrini in Northern Italy, and a spare magazine,

"THE WOLF'S ELECTRONICS CONTINUALLY MAP (MONITOR) EVERYTHING THAT'S GOING ON INSIDE THE RIFLE"

This is to be an ambidextrous rifle, offered with a fixed 400cc buddy bottle, and with a 500cc bottle option (at extra cost) should you believe you need more shots. Only FAC holders, who can elect to run their rifles at up to 40 ft.lbs., should need the larger reservoir, because, with a 200 bar charge in its 400cc bottle, a legal limit Wolf does well over 250 full-power shots in .177 and many more than 300 in .22. If you want to know why my figures are so non-specific, it's because I once (and only once) sat at a bench and fired 25, 10-shot magazines' worth of shots from a .177 Air Wolf, and that gun was still going strong, plus it ran the first-generation electronics which have been superseded by this latest, even more efficient, version, so I know today's Wolf will produce plenty more shots per charge than that one did. If you're struggling to follow that, and I couldn't blame you, I mean I've proved that a less-

which when you add those to the cost of the silencer, comes to a very handy 195 quid's worth of added extras. No such thing as a free lunch? Perhaps, but there's no arguing with the fact that this special edition Tactical Wolf will be sold for exactly the same price as its standard stablemate.

Notice I said 'special edition', not 'limited edition'. This rifle isn't a '1 of 100' but an addition to the Daystate range that offers something a little different to those that prefer the 'tactical' style. Personally, I wish I knew what the hell 'tactical' actually meant, but until I decipher that properly, I'll stick to my own definition, which has 'tactical' as a reduction of 'totally practical'.

The Wolf's ambidextrous stock certainly fits that definition, being milled from solid beech and covered in a rubberised finish that is fully protective, highly 'grippy' even when wet, and completely non-shiny.

You'll notice the absence of chequering, which concerned me for a while until I took the prototype out



RRP
£1260



The Daystate AirWolf Tactical. Match accuracy in a totally practical format.



Electronic perfection. The Tactical's trigger is beyond criticism.



I like the feel and function of the bolt, but it would be better in non-shiny black.

in the field and deliberately got it wet. Actually, I had no choice because I found myself wading through dripping undergrowth to retrieve a squirrel I'd shot, but the fact remains that this stock needs no enhanced hand holds because the whole thing is anti-slip, thanks to that finish.

Right, it's time to outline some features that will be changing, and then I'll get on with the shooting.

DAYSTATE THE ORIGINAL PCP COMPANY

Daystate pioneered the development and production of the modern pre-charged air rifle, and it did so at a time when most of us were more than satisfied with our spring-piston powered rifles. It was a bold step indeed, back in the late 1970s, when the plans were drawn up to produce the first Daystate Huntsman, but the vision was there and the faith in that new-fangled PCP system was well founded.

As various models came and went, Daystate acquired a reputation for producing 'tractor tough' sporters, with little quarter given to style or cutting edge technology, but that all changed with the introduction of the truly groundbreaking Daystate Mk3 and its electronic powerplant. That original system itself now looks old hat compared to the MCT technology installed in the AirWolf Tactical. Yes, Daystate has progressed spectacularly from those rugged sporters of 30 years ago, but this company will be the first to confirm that – there's still plenty more to come.

Tactical prototype

First, it should be stressed that there are several features and details shown on the test rifle that will be changed by the time the production model arrives at the shops. For a start, there won't be a cut-out in the fore stock, as shown on this example, because there won't be an on-board pressure gauge to slot into it. The Wolf Tactical is fully electronic and as such its information screen gives you up-to-the-second information on your power reserves, plus its sensors will bleep a reminder at you when the internal air reserves reach a particular point and a re-charge is needed. Should you ignore these

TACTILE TACTICAL
Never underestimate the importance of a good trigger, and the AirWolf Tactical has one of the best in the business. Two stage, fully adjustable, and easy to set to every usable pressure, this trigger really helps you make the most of this superb sporter

alerts, the Wolf will chirrup at you every time you activate it, so there's absolutely no way you'll be running out of air, unless you are too 'challenged' to run a PCP in the first place. I've dealt with the matter of how clever you need to be to operate an Air Wolf, so let me close the point of Daystate doing away with the standard air pressure gauge by underlining the fact that you set the point at which the rifle warns you of your depleted air reserves, so you can have as much notice as you think you need, and an electronic bleep is certain to get

your attention, where a needle on a discreet gauge may not. Set the alert to bleep when the Wolf's pressure drops to 100 bar, and you'll be sorted.

Back to the features that won't appear on production guns, and I can confirm that the prototype's rosewood grip cap and white line spacer won't be retained, either. The woodwork, and as far as I know, the majority of the metalwork, will be matte-black, or very near offer. This makes perfect sense to me, because if Daystate is going for a full-on, totally practical hunting tool, then showy flourishes such as a rosewood cap and spacer have no part to play. For me, the same goes for the shiny cocking and loading bolt, trigger, and even the graphics on the breech block. If you're going to make a sporter 'stealthy', do the lot. ▶



The supplied MK V Reflex silencer slips over the barrel shroud and adds little to the length of the rifle.



The stock underside holds a series of access and adjustment features.

- Battery charging point
- Trigger adjuster screws
- Key operated lock
activates / deactivates rifle
- Main stock bolt
- Air charging connector

MY INPUT...

I've been asked by Daystate to provide input on what I'd like to see on the new AirWolf Tactical and so far I've come up with the following:

- Make it all matte-black – as far as possible
- Keep the weight and balance exactly as it is – no lighter, no heavier, no shorter, no longer. The on-aim stability is perfect already
- Consider swivel fixings – although it's not hard to DIY, I'd rather Daystate's experts did them
- Think about an adjustable cheekpiece option for the future – perfect fit for the perfect shooting machine

The rest of the changes will come from reports handed in by Daystate's team of field testers, plus of course your input. Now it's time to plonk this rifle on a bench, fire up the chrono, and do some 'mapping' of my own. Let's see what that MAP system can really do, eh?

On the range

Opting for the rifle's single shot mode (which, for no particular reason, I

stuck to for all but one of my hunting trips) I chose to use Daystate's own new Rangemaster L.I. pellets for the bulk of this test, although I did have a few 'extra curricular' sessions with my usual line-up of tried and trusted brands. While the Rangemasters did, indeed, shoot superbly, they were pushed hard by an older brand of Daystate pellet, and good old H&N FT Trophy, showing once and for all the value of testing individual guns with individual pellets. The new Rangemasters shaded it, though, and I wasn't surprised because Daystate have selected these, and the single die that produces them, specifically for its rifles.

With the MAP technology presumably sensing its

electronic heart out, I fired 50 shots over the chrono as I zeroed the Tactical. I didn't need to do much, as it turned out, because the rifle had been pre-zeroed at the company's Staffordshire headquarters with the pellets supplied, so a swift nudge forward of the scope to suit my head position was all that was needed.

The accuracy of this rifle is nothing short of clinical...boring even. Not in a bad boring way, but in a totally expected and not remotely surprising way. The Wolf Tactical may be built as a rugged, 'take whatever's thrown at it' type of sporter, but its accuracy is produced as though it comes from a laboratory instrument. The trigger is sublime, there's barely a report



Nothing made will outshoot this amazing rifle.

...NOW IT'S YOUR TURN

If you'd like to see anything added, or removed, from this or any Daystate rifle, please let me know via the editor at the usual addresses. I'll make sure your thoughts are passed on to Daystate.





Grip, not slip. The rubberised finish on the Wolf's stock negates the need for chequering.

NO FEAR GUARANTEE
If you're worried about dealing with so much hi-tech gadgetry, don't be. The AirWolf handles the techno stuff for you, leaving you to get on with the shooting. Easy!

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| AIRWOLF TACTICAL |
| Model: AirWolf Tactical |
| Manufacturer: Daystate |
| Country of Origin: UK |
| Contact: 01782 791755 |
| Price: £1260 includes, 10 shot magazine, single shot pellet tray, mains charger, two keys and CD Rom instructions / handbook, MkV Reflex silencer and padded hard case |
| Type: Fully electronic, pre-charged, multi-shot/single shot sporter |
| Calibre: .177 or .22 |
| Cocking: Bolt-action |
| Loading: Removable, rotary magazine, or single shot pellet tray |
| Trigger: Two-stage, adjustable |
| Sights: Scope rail only |
| Stock Type: Rubberised beech, ambidextrous, thumbhole sporter |
| Weight: 3.44 k. (7.5 lbs. unscoped) |
| Length: 957mm (37.7 inches) |
| Barrel: 420 mm (16.5 inches) |
| Shots-per-charge: 250-plus from 200-bar in .177 300-plus in .22 |
| Power: 11-plus ft.lbs. |
| COST: £1260 |

worth mentioning from the muzzle, no 'blip' from the sight picture through the scope, and the luxury of watching the pellets fly all the way to the target. I had a spotlight on the target which lit up the flat rear of the Rangemaster pellets a treat, turning them into little tracers as they flew 45 yards downrange.

At 45 yards, this rifle prints one-hole groups, and that's a plain and simple fact. I managed a couple of these at 50 yards, but because that's not a realistic hunting range for a legal limit rifle, I

only messed at it really. Switching to my own maximum hunting range of 40 yards, and preferably 10 yards closer if

"AT 45 YARDS, THIS RIFLE PRINTS ONE-HOLE GROUPS, AND THAT'S A PLAIN AND SIMPLE FACT."

possible, the ease with which the Wolf drills out one-holes has to be shot to be believed. Time after time the 12-bore

cartridge cases I stick end-on in my pile of soft sand, just got hammered. I've got some .410 cases in there as well, and

despite their diminished size, they were nailed just as regularly. Off a bench, at sensible ranges, only the wind and a brain-fade from the shooter can get in the way of truly stunning accuracy from a Daystate Air Wolf.

In the field

Lately, my hunting results with rifles I'm testing have been abysmal, but that's the way it goes in the real world. This time around threatened to be more of the same, until I broke a three-trip blank with the squirrel I mentioned earlier. The shot was nothing spectacular, but the Wolf's balance and the pure confidence of knowing it would put a pellet exactly where I needed it makes every shot that much more certain. I went on to add 22 rabbits to my tally, although they came in a single lamping session from a 4 x 4 pickup, with me resting the Wolf on a padded door mirror, the 10-shot magazine fitted, and ranges from 10 to 35 yards, so the driver had more to do than I had. I just kept pointing the Wolf, cranking the bolt, and tripping the trigger, as the Wolf did the rest. We are blessed with sporters that can produce jaw-dropping performance these days, but, for what it does and how it does it, nothing out there can surely beat this one. It's expensive, but the best usually is. ■



All the info you'll ever need, at a glance. Don't be afraid of it, though.