



MEMBERS UPDATE

January, 2019

A close-up photograph of a rifle's trigger mechanism and barrel. The trigger is black with two red safety pins. The barrel is also black and has a large, circular opening at the muzzle. The rifle is resting on a wooden surface.

**WHY YOUR NEXT
FAVORITE RIFLE
ISN'T A FIREARM**

- **5 Keys to Finding Your Rural Hideaway**
- **Strength Training for Shooters: Part II**
- **Blackhawk Down: 25 Years Later**



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Why Your Next Favorite Rifle Is NOT a Firearm

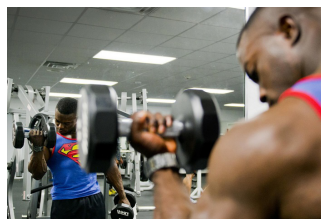
The invention of gunpowder in the 9th century changed the course of human history. Are we at this moment witnessing another seismic shift in weapons technology? It doesn't really matter, because these next-gen guns are as powerful and exciting as they are fun to shoot!



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Black Hawk Down: 25 Years Later

The Battle of Mogadishu, often referred to as the “Black Hawk Down” incident, was a key turning point in the way the Army Rangers are trained. In addition to their courage and training, military historians point to a certain device that helped give our Rangers an edge.



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Strength Training for Shooters: Part II

While most shooters think they need to go to the range to improve their skillset, they'd be shocked at how much they could accomplish at the gym. Upper and lower-body workouts, dry fire training, and eye exercises are critical if you want to take your shooting to the next level.



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5 Keys to Finding Your Rural Hideaway

The start of a new year often finds us dreaming of the future. If your dreams include buying a ranch, farm, or backcountry hideaway of some kind, you'd better read this first. This guide will help you make the best decision possible before you sign on the dotted line.

Why Every SELF-RELIANCE FANATIC Should Own One (or a Few) of These

Every January at the NSRA, we like to come up with at least one way to challenge the mindsets that have become so deeply ingrained into shooting, hunting, or self-reliance culture that we don't even notice we've adopted them. You know, like the idea that freeze-dried food is the most important thing you need in zombie apocalypse. Or the idea that the M1911 is outdated...

One of these mindsets that almost every one of us has bought into is the belief in "firearm superiority." That is, the idea that gunpowder is and will remain the best way to launch projectiles from a weapon.

Look, we love pretty much all things that shoot, slice, or roll, but one thing that's very quickly becoming undeniable is that not all things that shoot go "BANG!" And while we do love archery, and particularly crossbows in a backcountry survivalist application, that's not where this article is headed.

Technological advancements are rewriting the book in all kinds of arenas. A few short years ago, polymer handguns were dismissed as plastic guns. Sub MOA rifles had to come with a price tag starting at a thousand bucks. And we never thought we'd see the day when we'd recommend a lithium ion electric chainsaw over a 2-stroke (for medium to light users anyway).

These are only a few examples of tech-driven game changers that are re-writing the book for us outdoor gearheads. Is there another game-changer unfolding before our very eyes?



Let's cut to the chase; when was the last time you took a serious look at air-powered guns? If it's been 5 years or more, then it's high time that you took another look. Air rifle technology, in particular, has been advancing in ways that will almost certainly blow your mind, pun intended.

Along with the advancements in technology, you may be equally surprised by the enthusiasm and acceptance that these weapons are now being met with. Shooting ranges, fanboys, and even state game agencies are adapting at a commendable pace. In fact, at least 11 states currently allow the use of air guns to hunt big game species. Longtime hunters: We're pretty sure you never expected to read that.

But if you're familiar with the technology, then you can easily see how these changes are almost unavoidable. These rifles are incredibly more powerful and consistent than the pump-action pellet guns you spent hours and hours shooting as a kid. In fact, many are easily more lethal than any broad head on the market, and even many center fire rounds.

Only one state completely prohibits hunting with air rifles, New Hampshire. As you might expect, laws vary a great deal from state-to-state regarding which species are permitted to be hunted with air guns. Then of course, there are many caliber and velocity requirements in play as well. But the point we're driving at is simple; these ain't your granddaddy's air rifles.

The Ultimate Apocalyptic Rifle is ~~NOT~~ a Firearm?



There's a long-standing tradition that a shotgun, rifle and a four-wheel drive is what's needed in order for a country boy (or girl) to survive a societal collapse. But the fact is, air rifles have come a long way since ol' Hank Jr. wrote those words.

They may soon need an update to include air rifles and a good internet connection (yes, we're kidding about the internet connection). Still, many of the benefits of these rifles are as appealing during squirrel season as they are in a zombie apocalypse.

For instance, it's now commonplace to find break action air rifles that fire the tried and true .177 caliber pellet with a greater muzzle velocity than you'd achieve with the store-bought .22lr rounds.

Then, for a few dollars more, you can purchase a .22 caliber air rifle that will launch pellets at a muzzle velocity upwards of 1,200 fps – faster than a traditional rimfire .22lr shooting high-velocity ammo. Just think about how many animals have fallen prey to the iconic Ruger 10/22. And these “springers,” as break-action air rifles are often called, are just the tip of the iceberg.

The rapid development of PCP Air Guns (short for Pre-Charged Pneumatic) has broken down age-old barriers, even encroaching into centerfire rifle territory. Only a few short years ago, you'd have to be on PCP to believe that a “pellet gun” could deliver more kinetic energy than the venerable .45 ACP, but times are a'changing.



The fact is, there are now literally dozens of PCP air rifles on the market today that produce more “knock down power” than a .45 ACP with considerably greater accuracy than your 1911 is capable of. Several popular models launch lead with kinetic energy that's on par with the more powerful .45 Long Colt – no gunpowder required.



In fact, these PCP weapons are charged with compressed air (not CO₂), which means all that's required in order to recharge your rifle is a bike pump! Preferably, you'd use an air compressor of course. Most enthusiasts fairly quickly opt for a tank-fill method which they prefill before leaving the house. Actually, many shooters still use scuba tanks, although there are now tanks sold specifically for PCP rifles.



Thus, they can keep shooting at the range and simply refill quickly and quietly whenever the rifle's reserve tank gets low. It's all pretty fascinating to those coming from a purely firearms background. It's a different set of gear and a different process, but one that's quickly crossing all kinds of divides.

As the interest in this technology grows, the performance, reliability, and affordability will certainly improve. But that's not all that PCP air guns have to offer the shooter and the sportsman. As of now, these guns are largely unregulated. They are, in fact, not firearms and thus don't fall under many of the restrictions placed on traditional guns.

BREAKING Through Hunting Barriers



Perhaps the most surprising factor with big bore PCP air guns is how quickly state game agencies (known to be slow to adapt to new weapons and techniques) are adopting them into hunting regulations. Several states including Texas began permitting hunters to use PCP air guns to harvest deer in 2018. As it stands, the only state that doesn't allow air gun use in harvesting game species is New Hampshire.

Granted, most states only allow the use of air rifles when hunting small game. But the change is coming down the pike, and much faster than us longtime hunters would ever have expected. For small game hunters, it's hard to imagine a weapon that's better suited for squirrels, rabbits, and raccoons than today's highly accurate springers.

When it comes to PCP rifles, the standards are currently being set on what constitutes a legal PCP hunting rifle. According to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission, "Pre-charged pneumatic air guns must fire a projectile of at least 30 caliber in diameter and at least 150 grains in weight with a minimum muzzle velocity of 800 feet per second or any combination of bullet weight and muzzle velocity that produces muzzle energy of at least 215 foot pounds of energy."



In fact, the August 23rd, 2018 regulations actually provide guidance as to what hunters can expect and how to limit the loss of wounded animals. That's because, as goes with archery hunting, these projectiles don't create the same type of shock that an expanding metal bullet would. Thus, a successful kill is achieved by hemorrhage, i.e. blood loss.

A traditional centerfire hunting bullet, on the other hand, expands on contact and often throws an animal into an immediate state of shock, which is why they often go down within 25 yards of the location where they were first hit. A PCP bullet, much like an arrow, will often pass through without immediately destroying a vital organ. The result is often a fairly lengthy blood trail, even with good shot placement.



From the TPWD's 2018 Regulations, "Although big game animals have been harvested with air guns at distances greater than 150 yards, the effective range is recommended to be 75 yards or closer. Beyond 75 yards, the ability of some models of air guns or arrow guns to be lethal becomes diminished, so it is critical for hunters to know the limitation of the model of air gun being used and practice with the equipment just like with any sporting arm."

CASE STUDY: AirForce Texas SS



One of the PCP rifles grabbing the most headlines as of late is the Texan SS, manufactured by AirForce. Granted, one reason this rifle is turning heads is its hefty price tag. The Texan retails for around \$1,300 – admittedly no small sum for an "air rifle." The other reasons, however, are pretty compelling.

The Texan comes in three calibers (.30, .357, and .45), but in honor of this rifle's namesake, as well as the most impressive stats this model can produce, we're going to go with the concept that bigger is better. The .45 caliber Texan SS launches an impressive 265-grain pellet at a velocity of 930 feet per second.

Compare that to a .45ACP round fired through one of our all-time favorite firearms, the M1911A1, achieves a muzzle velocity of 830fps. This is why many big bore PCP rifle enthusiasts maintain that their .45 caliber pneumatic rifles compare more closely with the ballistics of a 45 Long Colt, which has a bit more zip to it.

But wait, there's more to the PCP rifle craze than simply firing a projectile at a comparable speed with a centerfire handgun. Another reason the Texan SS is getting such a warm reception is that it comes standard with something you might not expect an air rifle to need: a suppressor.

While it's true that PCP air rifles aren't quite as loud as comparable firearms, hearing protection is still a very much a necessity. Given the repetitive nature of shooting, even the air blast of a pre-charged pneumatic rifle has the capacity to damage your hearing. That is, unless you're shooting the Texan SS, which is roughly as loud as your Red Ryder BB gun.

So, that explains why a suppressor is beneficial when shooting a PCP rifle. But the million-dollar question is: Why is this suppressed big bore rifle legal without any special legal clearances or permissions?

Simply put, a "suppressor" is legally defined as a device designed to suppress the sound produced by a firearm; and these PCP rifles are not firearms. Thus, federal laws regulating traditional suppressors simply don't apply in the case of air powered weapons, and likely won't apply for a long time if ever they do.

And of course, there's no FFL dealer or FBI background check involved in purchasing these rifles currently, if that holds any interest to you. These weapons are simply off the grid in terms of regulations in most states.

SMALL GAME Hunting with Springers



Taking a step down in terms of overall kinetic energy, but not muzzle velocity, we have the break-open "springer" class of air rifles. If you're a small game hunter, have a backyard pellet range, or you're a survivalist, these rifles are hard to beat.

First things first, ammo is dirt cheap for these rifles. All you need to make these things shoot are a box of pellets and a little elbow grease to cock the piston, which gives you virtually unlimited ammo. That's an advantage that's pretty compelling for some shooters. But equally compelling for many folks is the option to plink to your heart's content quietly.

If you live on a few acres, you know that sometimes shooting loud firearm for an extended period of time feels rude. It's a lot of noise and there are certain times of the day you just don't want to disturb the peace. Or perhaps you just don't want anyone and everyone within earshot to know that you're shooting at all. It's polite, effective, and undetectable from a distance.

Certainly, these capabilities are appealing to those with a prepper/survivalist mindset; those who would value the ability to hunt small game without being detected. We're going out on a limb here, but we're going to guess that having an inexpensive and abundant source of ammo appeals to that mindset as well.

But the real practical application for these weapons is target shooting and small game hunting. These rifles have made strides recently that elevate them from simple pellet guns to small game hunters. And they most certainly will get the job done.

As for calibers, the most common are the tried and true .177 and the .22 pellet classes. More recently, .20 caliber and .25 caliber have established themselves as strong competitive options. But is bigger truly better in all cases? Much of the same thinking that one dominated the firearms caliber debate applies to the air gun world, unfortunately.

At present, the velocities produced by .177 caliber air rifles compensate for a smaller diameter very well. On the other hand, .25 caliber springers are generally slower and thus have their own advantages and disadvantages. Since the equation that dictates kinetic energy (i.e. “knockdown power”) is still the same old: $Momentum = Mass \times Velocity$, the same power can be achieved with a smaller or larger pellet. There’s your physics review for the day.

Still, what does this mean for small game hunters? In a nutshell, air rifle hunting experts generally agree on the applications and limitations of these springers, regardless of caliber. For illustration purposes, let’s use the very popular Ruger Air Magnum as our point of reference. With an advertised muzzle velocity of 1200fps in the .22 caliber version, this thing will give certainly give any rimfire .22 a run for its money.



Reading reviews of this beast of a springer, you’ll definitely come across mentions of 1-shot kills on game ranging from squirrels to raccoons to coyotes... even wild hogs. Truth be told, there’s little that the Air Magnum couldn’t bring down under the exact perfect conditions.

However, just as you might with any type of hunting, ethics must be considered when selecting your weapon. A poorly placed shot or shooting a species beyond your rifle’s capability can backfire in truly horrendous ways. At the very least, you won’t be able to recover the animal. At worst, you may have a wounded animal and a very grisly scene.

Experts generally agree that you should be able to place 6 rounds into a quarter sized group at 10 yards in order to ethically hunt with an air rifle. That’s

considered ethically harvested with these springers are that small. The largest animal considered ethical by the majority would be a raccoon. Now, that does include many other varmints in that weight class, but moving up a size even to coyote hunting reduces your odds to a very questionable level.

Some manufacturers have gotten bold with their claims, to the point of nearly advocating the use of their break-barrel rifles on hogs and other large game. The best rule of thumb it seems is that if you wouldn’t hunt this animal with a .22lr, then you shouldn’t consider using a springer. Again, it’s a personal choice that each hunter must make for himself.

WRAP UP

To wrap things up (and tease next month’s article) traditional firearms have dominated shooting sports for centuries now, and we don’t see that changing any time soon. However, air guns now present a real competitive option to firearms on a number of exciting fronts.

Pre-Charged Pneumatics are clearly a viable alternative for big game hunting, target shooting, and many other applications. At the same time, a break-barrel pellet rifle can be substituted for almost all rimfire uses you can think of. These are exciting times for shooters, as we’re witnessing a bit of history unfold here.

And if that whets your appetite to give this new wave of rifles a chance, you’re in luck. Keep an eye out for next month’s article in which we’ll explore, in detail, the very best entry level springers that’ll make a believer out of you skeptics. So, until next time, keep shooting!





BLACK HAWK DOWN: 25 YEARS LATER

Twenty-five years ago, one of the most heroic battles in recent history took place in Ethiopia that introduced a new type of technology that would give the U.S. military a massive advantage on the battlefield.

Back in the early 1990s our elite forces began training a lot for urban fighting in preparation for a special mission commissioned by President George H.W. Bush.

The mission would oversee the transfer of food and medical supplies to the people of Mogadishu. Seems easy enough, right?

Just one problem: Mogadishu was considered and still is by some to be the most dangerous city in the world. Warlords commanded their men to seize the air drops of food to be sold in black markets.



Meanwhile the people starved.

President Bush called on Task Force Ranger on October 3, 1993 led by one of the most fearsome

attack helicopters known as Black Hawks. But it all went terribly wrong when two of them were shot down by RPGs.

The race was on to rescue the downed pilots but every street was flooded with militia men chewing khat, a narcotic that made them terrible shots but fearless in battle.

As the battle raged our Army Rangers were completely outnumbered, but they did have three massive advantages: the best training in the world, night vision goggles and a powerful new device attached to their rifles.

If you ask a lot of the guys who fought in the Battle of Mogadishu one of the biggest advantages we had was our military technology.

Our army was the first to adapt optics **like laser sights.**

Hell, a lot of our guys would tell you this probably saved their lives fighting block by block, outnumbered in pitch black darkness against hundreds of bad dudes.

The reason why is how quickly **it allowed our boys to acquire targets and accurately lay down fire.**

Last month, military historian Leigh Neville on the 25th anniversary of the Black Hawk Down episode said this about the Rangers' adaptation of laser sights:



“...these items of equipment saw widespread adoption by the Ranger Regiment in the wake of the Mogadishu battle and by the start of the War on Terror, they were pretty much standard issue across the US military.

Delta had also placed a lot of emphasis on close quarter shooting and breaching in an urban environment- both skills which were soon incorporated into Ranger training after Mogadishu.”

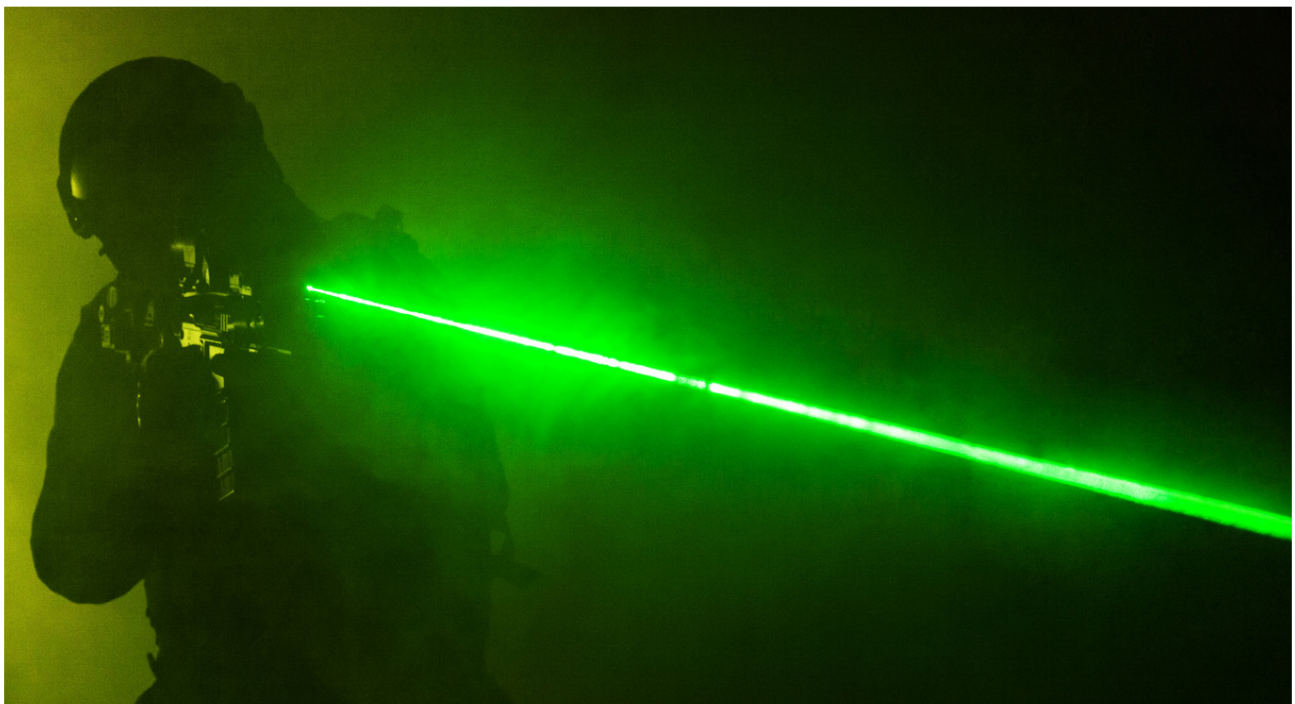
Now, regular folks like you and I will probably never have to worry about having a shootout with bad guys...

But having the same kind laser sight technology our elite forces carries sure helps make shooting more fun...

Day time or at night.

So, in honor of our boys who fought for each other in the streets of Mogadishu I'm making available our laser sights for less than \$20.

Get yours here: MyCrisisGear.com/laser





Strength Training for Shooters: Part II

If you find it difficult to hold a pistol or rifle on a target without feeling shaky or fatigued, then a progressive resistance training program is exactly what you need. That's because an upper body strength program will help you develop better muscle control and endurance as well as muscle memory, all of which will improve your shooting performance.

With better muscle control, the easier it will be to keep your weapon steady due to the ability of the upper body muscles to control movement and hold a contracted position. Although many believe joints are the real reason behind movement and need to be strengthened, this is not correct and could be a reason behind your lack of steadiness.

Your joints are not the problem. The lack of muscles surrounding the joints is the issue at hand.

When one holds a weapon, he or she is doing so by contracting the muscles surrounding the joints. The stronger these muscles are, the easier it is to visualize them while holding a weapon. And you need to be

able to visualize these muscles in order to use them correctly and keep the weapon steady.

You, the shooter, should visualize the arm as a “steel rod,” starting from the shoulder joint and ending at the middle finger. It is secured by the rotator cuff, bicep, tricep, and forearm; not by locking the elbow joint. This “rod” is further held up by the help of the pectorals and upper back muscles.

However, many people struggle to visualize their muscles simply because the muscles are weak or non-existent. That is why strength training is necessary.

Your ability to visualize the muscles listed above will greatly increase your control of the weapon. By performing isometric and dynamic exercises, which you will read about later on, you will build the necessary strength to envision the muscles at work. Then you will be able to take advantage of the muscles' ability to contract and maintain a position with little to no wavering.



By strengthening the upper body, not only will you build the necessary fibers to increase your steadiness, you will also create muscle memory, which is the main goal of training for pistol or rifle marksmanship.

Think of muscle memory as putting your body on “autopilot.” As you increase your upper body strength and use these muscles repeatedly while training, your brain will begin to store memories of these muscles movements.

Take Marines for example. They are put through rigorous physical training and spend countless hours “snapping in.” By performing the same movement repeatedly while using the upper body muscles, “snapping in” helps develop muscle memory of a stable firing position and in turn builds the shooter’s confidence to consistently produce accurate shots.

In order to develop a solid firing position to help stabilize your weapon for a consistently accurate shot, you need to strengthen the rotator cuff muscles (supraspinatus, subscapularis, infraspinatus, teres major, teres minor, bicep tendons), tricep brachii (triceps), pectorals (pecs), trapezius (traps), rhomboid major and minor (rhomboids), and latissimus dorsi (lats).

Each muscles group plays a crucial part in holding the weapon correctly while keeping it steady. The rotator cuff muscles increase your stability and range of motion; the pectorals control arm motion and creates vertical, lateral, or rotational movements; the traps elevate, depress, rotate, and retract the shoulder blades; the rhomboids retract and rotate the shoulder blades; and the lats help extend the arm.

All of these muscles work together to create stability and can dramatically change how you hold yourself

Chapman, Isosceles) if strengthened.

To strengthen the upper body, you will be utilizing dynamic exercises. With this type of exercise, the muscles produce a concentric and eccentric movement. For example, when performing a bicep curl, the lifting part of the move is the concentric action while the lowering movement is the eccentric action. When these two actions are put together, they create a dynamic movement.

As mentioned above, to develop muscle memory, we will also focus on an isometric exercise in which the muscle does not change length and the affected joint does not move, unlike in a dynamic exercise.

Before we get into the program and break down the exercises, let’s go over the ground rules:

- Always warm-up before strength training
- Complete all movements through a full range of motion
- Rest 45-60 seconds in between sets
- Avoid injury by starting with moderate weight
- Increase weight in small increments once you can perform 15 reps of exercise with good form
- If you decide to add weight: load chosen should produce “failure” by repetition 12-15, meaning you can’t do more than 12-15 reps in a particular exercise
- Do not focus solely on your shooting arm. This will cause imbalances. Increase strength on both the left and right side
- And always STOP EXERCISING if you feel any unnatural strain

For those who are new to strength training, the purpose to any type of strength exercise is to do repetitions (reps) and sets. A rep is one full motion of an exercise (example: going up and down for a push up) while a set is a number of reps without taking a break.

If you follow the program below, keep the guidelines in mind, and use correct form, you will see a huge change in the way you hold your weapon, no matter your current age and/or physical condition. Just make sure to be careful and enjoy!

The Program

Day 1: Chest, Triceps, and Biceps

Bench Press: 3 sets of 10-12 reps

Alternating Bicep Curls: 3 sets of 12-15 reps

Bent-over Tricep Kickbacks: 3 sets of 12 reps on each side

Diamond Push-up: 3 sets of 15 reps

Concentration Curls: 3 sets of 12 reps on each side

Day 2 : Shoulders and Upper Back

Single Arm Overhead Press: 3 sets of 12 reps on each arm

Reverse Fly: 3 sets of 12 reps

Upright Row: 3 sets of 12 reps

Reverse Grip Lat Pulldowns: 3 sets of 12 reps

Off Days: Isometric Exercise

Weapon Hold: 3 sets of 5 reps

- Find a bench and lay down on your back
- Before you start, make sure your upper back is evenly distributed on the bench by pulling your elbows back and behind you
- Always warm-up with a set of 15 reps using just the bar before adding weight
- When doing the chest press, you want to have a small curve in the lower back to keep the back safe and so you can keep your chest up and get full range of motion
- Grip the bar just outside the width of your shoulders
- Make sure to keep your wrist straight and hold the bar on your palms. If the bar is held near the fingers, your wrist will bend back while performing the exercise and diminish its effectiveness
- Inhale, unrack the bar, and exhale
- Take another breath and hold it to keep your core braced
- Keep your elbows tucked and pinch your shoulder blades as you lower the bar down to your chest in a controlled motion
- Make sure the bar touches your chest to get full range of motion (do not bounce it off your chest)
- Breathe out as you push the weight back up
- Repeat prescribed reps and sets

The Exercises

Dynamic Exercises

Bench Press



Alternating Bicep Curls (dumbbells)



- In a standing position, with your core engaged, hold the dumbbells in both hands with the palms facing out and your arms extended towards the ground: this is your starting position

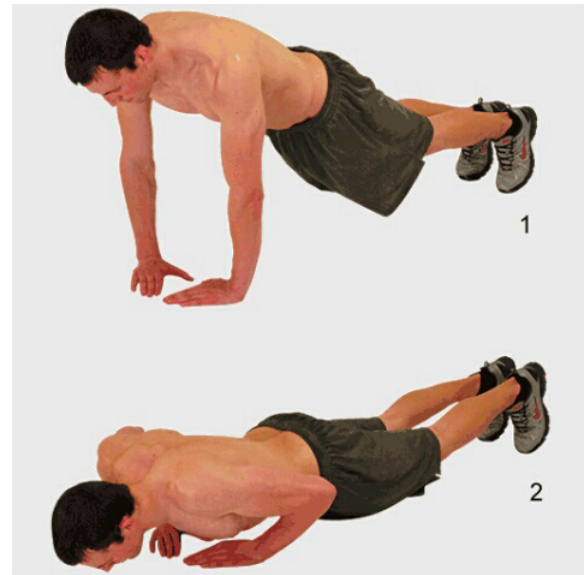
- Exhale and slowly curl the dumbbell in your right hand up towards the shoulder using your bicep
- Keep your elbow close to your body throughout the movement
- Inhale and slowly return your arm to the starting position
- Switch to your left side and repeat
- Do not rock back and forth! Your arms are the only thing moving in this exercise
- Repeat prescribed reps and sets
- Pause at the top and hold the contraction for one count
- Inhale and slowly lower the dumbbells back to the starting position in a controlled manner
- Repeat prescribed amount of reps and sets

Bent-over Tricep Kickbacks (dumbbells)



- Start with dumbbells in both hands and your palms facing each other
- Bend forward at the hips, keeping your back straight with your core engaged and a slight bend in your knees
- Keep your torso almost parallel to the floor and head up
- For the starting position, your upper arms are close to your torso and parallel to the floor while your forearms are pointed towards the floor. Together, the upper arms and forearms create a 90 degree angle
- While keeping your upper arms stationary, exhale and use your triceps to lift the weight behind you until your arms are fully extended

Diamond Push-up



- Get down on all fours and place your hands together under your chest. Your shoulders, elbows, and hands should be in one straight line
- Now, form a diamond shape with your hands under your chest and extend your arms so that your body is elevated
- You should form a straight line from your head to your feet
- Keep your core tight!
- Lower your chest towards your hands, pinching your shoulder blades on the way down
- Make sure to keep your elbows as close to your body as possible without them flaring out
- Stop right before your chest touches the ground and then push back up to the starting position
- If this is too hard, you can modify the intensity by performing the push-up on your knees
- Perform recommended reps and sets

Concentration Curls (dumbbell)



- Find a flat bench and sit down with your feet flat on the floor, knees bent and legs spread wide
- Hold a dumbbell in your right hand between your legs
- Rest the back of your right upper arm on the top of your inner right thigh with your palm facing away from your thigh and your arm fully extended: this is your starting position
- Breathe out as you contract your bicep and curl the weight to shoulder level
- The only thing that should move is your forearm
- Hold the contraction at the top for a second
- Breathe in as you lower the weight back to the starting position in a controlled manner
- Repeat recommended reps then switch sides

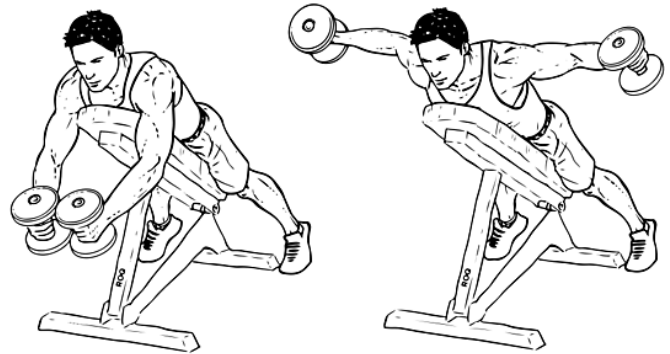
Single Arm Overhead Press (dumbbell)



- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart with your knees slightly bent

- Hold the dumbbell with your arm bent and palm facing inward, just outside the working shoulder
- Place your non-working hand on your hip
- Keep your core tight throughout the motion
- Press the dumbbell overhead until your bicep is near your ear
- Make sure to keep your shoulders away from your ears
- Slowly return to the starting position
- Make sure not to bend toward any side!
- Repeat prescribed number of reps and switch arms

Reverse Fly (dumbbells)



- Lie down on an incline bench with your chest and stomach pressing against the bench the entire exercise
- Keep your legs stationary by pushing the ball of your toes into the ground
- Grab the dumbbells and keep your palms facing each other throughout the motion
- Now, extend your arms so they are perpendicular to the bench: this is your starting position
- Exhale and keep your elbows slightly bent as you move the weights out to the side in an arc-like motion
- Elevate your arms until they are parallel to the ground
- Make sure to pinch your shoulder blades to get the most out of this exercise
- Inhale and slowly return to the starting position
- Repeat prescribed reps and sets

Upright Row (dumbbells or barbell)



- Grab a barbell or dumbbells with an overhand grip (slightly less than shoulder width)
- With your back straight, core engaged, and arms extended with a slight bend in your elbows, rest the bar or dumbbells on the top of your thighs: this is your starting position
- Exhale and use the side of your shoulders to lift the bar or dumbbells by raising your elbows up and to the side
- Make sure to keep the weight close to your body and continue to lift until it reaches your chin
- Note: your elbows should always be higher than your forearms when doing this exercise
- Keep your torso upright the entire time
- Pause at the top and slowly return back to the starting position while inhaling
- Repeat recommended reps and sets

Reverse Grip Lat Pulldown



- Find a pull down machine with a wide bar attachment

- Adjust the knee pad to fit your height and comfort (this will help keep your body secure)
- Grab the bar with a close grip (less than shoulder width) and your palms facing you
- Extend your arms and lean back about 30 degrees with your chest lifted: this is your starting position
- Keep your chest lifted and shoulders away from your ears throughout the movement
- Exhale and bring the bar down to your chest by pinching the shoulder blades and bringing the upper arms down and back
- Your torso should stay completely still while your arms do the work
- Focus on using your back muscles rather than your forearms and biceps
- Once you've pulled the bar to your chest, hold the contraction for a second and slowly raise the bar back up to the starting position
- Repeat recommended reps and sets

Isometric Exercise

Weapon Hold

- With this exercise, you will be holding your pistol or rifle for a prolonged period of time
- Bring your pistol or rifle up to an offhand position and hold it for 30 seconds: this is one rep
- Start with 3 sets of 5 reps
- Make sure to practice with your weak hand as well
- As you get stronger, or if it is too easy, increase reps by 15 second increments until you can do it for 1 minute
- After that, start increasing the numbers of sets
- Once you are able to complete 6 sets of 5 reps, start adding weight to your pistol or rifle
- Perform this exercise three times a week for best results



*5 Keys to Finding the
Perfect Rural
Bug-out Property
for You*



There's no shortage of Americans dreaming nostalgically for a simpler time, back when folks knew their neighbors, raised their own livestock, and spent the warm months chopping wood for the winter. Put into words, these visions read like the lyrics to some wistful country song, the kind that can often be overheard in the offices here at the NSRA.

Likewise, these "back to the basics of love" style visions are typically dreamed up in nostalgic sepia tones, color schemes that are perfect for hiding the harsh realities that come into sharp focus when the ox is in the ditch, so to speak.

We're not saying this a bad thing, these rural dreams without the rural nightmares, quite the opposite actually. In fact, it's exactly this type of rose-colored optimism that inspires eager new farmers, ranchers, and homesteaders to try their hands at rural property ownership.

It seems like each year at around this time, when the weather keeps us indoors more than we'd like, similar wheels start turning in many of our heads. Hunters dream of owning their own hunting ranches, gardeners dream of using their green thumb to earn a living, bug-out preppers dream of creating a completely self-sustaining cabin in the middle of nowhere, and so on.

Winter is an ideal time to start working on converting that vision from a dream into a workable plan, one that you can begin executing from a command center with a warm cup of coffee at your side.

The New Self-Reliant American Dream

The traditional American dream was a nice single-family home with a picket fence and a yard. Recently, however, we've noticed a shift in the American dream, one that's coming on strong.

The new American dream often includes a larger, more rural property where folks can spread out, raise chickens in the yard, pick banjos on the porch, and shoot their guns.

No, it's not for everybody. But more and more Americans are seeing the value in the front porch lifestyles their great grandparents enjoyed.



We suspect that the reason for this is has a lot to do with a major demographic shift that's left over 80% of Americans calling an urban or suburban area "home." While these areas offer many perks and amenities for young people and families, it's what they don't offer that many Americans now crave: Namely, access to outdoor activities.

If you're looking to hunt, fish, shoot guns, or drive a tractor, well, opportunities are limited where most of us now reside. For many, access to these kinds of activities are a part of our inalienable rights as Americans. Plus, there's a certain level of independence and pride that can only be enjoyed on your very own spread.

Combine that with the booming popularity of self-reliance, shooting sports, gardening, homesteading, and hunting, and it's easy to see why many people are considering purchasing their own slice of the American dream.

And while "Meanwhile, back at the ranch," evokes the romantic Hollywood notion of rural living, Green Acres style, the truth is there are plenty of pitfalls that can make your homesteader's dream a bumpy ride. That's why we came up with this list of key factors you must consider before you buy the farm (literally, not figuratively).

1. Tax Status



Buying real estate, whether it's a single-family home or a heavily romanticized self-sustaining ranch, is by and large an emotional decision. If you're a realtor, you know this all too well.

Once you've fallen in love with a property, for whatever reason, it's very hard to put on the brakes and evaluate the purchase from a purely rational perspective.

This is exactly why it's better to set your criteria and stick to your guns. Filter out any properties that don't fit with your goals before you can fall in love with the idea of them. Because, truth be told, owning these properties and falling in love with them are extremely different experiences.

It's for precisely this reason that we've placed real estate taxes at the #1 spot. Most states offer some fairly nice tax advantages, often called an "agricultural evaluations" or "ag exemptions," for properties that meet certain agricultural use criteria.

Not having these tax advantages can sometimes be overwhelming. The crushing reality of the typical mortgage payments, unexpected setbacks, and other costs can be sobering enough, but unexpected tax bills can fully derail your homesteading dream before it ever leaves the station.

The tax bill on properties with an Ag exemption are often less than 5% of what it would cost if your taxing authority evaluated the property as raw land. These tax breaks are, of course, designed to help farmers and ranchers retain their properties (and businesses) in the face of rising values; and they do help many folks.

However, many state legislatures have set up a pretty rigorous set of rules in order to qualify for this status. In some states, for example, the minimum timeline for qualifying a previously unqualified piece of property as "agricultural" is 5 years. That 5 years begins the day you've successfully applied for the evaluation on a property that meets the state's requirements. That often requires "improvements" such as fences, tanks, and of course the addition of either crops or livestock.

If you were to purchase a property that doesn't yet qualify (e.g. it isn't currently being used for agricultural production), then you're going to be on the hook for the expenses required to startup a farming or ranching operation first. Only then can you apply for an agricultural tax status.

In a best-case scenario, you're paying the higher tax rate for the next 5 years until your property has qualified. Gulp.

On the other hand, if you set your criteria to only consider properties that are already qualified for this tax status, then you can simply renew and maintain the agricultural evaluation, if that's even necessary.

Granted, the scenario we've just outlined varies widely state to state. This 5-year standard is fairly common, but by no means are these tax benefits standardized, which is why the research is so crucial.

Your home state's property tax evaluations may not be as favorable as a neighboring state. Thus, you may decide to search for properties in Kentucky, rather than Ohio, simply because of the taxes.

Unless you've got some exceptionally deep pockets, the tax status of a property could make or break your dreams. Don't set yourself up for a nasty surprise. Do the research beforehand.

Even if you absolutely love the acreage, the setting, and the location, a property with an unsustainable tax bill may send you to the poor house.

2. *What's My Goal*



Carefully selecting and defining your goal is fundamental to your success as a property owner. Most people give themselves way too much wiggle room in this regard, and it costs them big time later down the road.

Yes, your goals will likely change over time, and they will definitely be refined as you gain experience. Still, no one's ever been disappointed that they did the adequate research beforehand.

The question you must ask yourself is: What would make this property a success?

Is affordability the key to you keeping this property over the long haul? Is it agricultural income potential? Is this really just a bug-out cabin that you'll use as a vacation property occasionally?

With stars in your eyes and visions of your children riding horses in your head, it's easy to convince yourself to go over budget or gloss over some of the key details.

Would you like it to be something that you pass to your heirs? Are you ever going to decide that you don't

civilization? Or even the collapse of civilization?

For the type of non-commercial property we're referring to, it's best to measure the success of your purchase by the length of time you choose to continue owning that property. It's really about that simple.

In fact, we'd go as far to say that, for all intents and purposes, hunters and hobby farmers are not remarkably different from any other rural property buyer.

Many people believe they'd love to own a ranch, or a farm, or a hunting property. The best indicator of how well that reality fit with their imagination is how long they continued to own the property (by choice).

The better a property fits your criteria and provides you the benefits you hope to gain, the longer you'll probably own it. If it's too expensive to maintain, or it was a passing phase, then you'll sell it as soon as possible.

3. *Accessibility*



The time and effort it takes to access your property can't be overstated, and yet this is something that many people immediately dismiss.

You might be thinking: I don't plan to visit more than X times a year, so the fact that it's a 6-hour drive from home isn't a big issue for me.

Or, you might plan to move to your homestead and think: I'm going to live on this property and work the land full-time, so there's no commute to worry about.

Both of these notions are dangerously high risk. Why? There's really no way around it, the ease of access is going to directly impact your ability to enjoy the property.

Thus, if you have to drive 500 miles to get there, it's just a matter of time before you get fed up with the mortgage, taxes, and other expenses involved. Not to mention, what happens when you leave an important item behind, or forget to bring something important from home?

On the flip side, don't underestimate how much local amenities will impact your ability to enjoy your property. If your rural retreat is 90 minutes from the nearest hardware store or feed store, you could be setting yourself up for some unpleasant realizations when you arrive to find a damaged fence or broken pipe.

That's how important accessibility is to your decision. Many people set a certain maximum radius or drive time to help narrow down options. Even when you do this, it's easy to talk yourself into tacking on another 30 minutes to get a larger or less expensive property.

Typically, the farther you get from a population center, the cheaper the prices get per acre. Just be sure you don't talk yourself into a drive that you're not willing to live with. Additionally, keep in mind that being within close reach of an Ace Hardware or Feed Barn can be pretty nice for lots of reasons.

4. Acreage

This is another tricky variable for most rural property buyers. If you plan to hunt on this property or raise cattle, then 30 acres won't go very far.

On the other hand, each acre you own equals more area to mow, more roads and fence line to maintain, as well as higher mortgage payments and taxes.



Thus, when it comes to acreage, the sweet spot falls somewhere between the minimum amount of land that will meet your needs and the maximum you can comfortably afford. Now that we see it in print, this formula appears deceptively easy. It's not.

Once again, the depth of your pockets will determine the breadth of your spread. Given our measurements for success (long-term ownership), we default to the financially conservative side regarding the size of your acreage. The last thing you need is to bite off more than you can chew and then be forced to spit it back out, so to speak.

You want to get a place where you can establish your own vision and build it for the long haul. Even if it's only 10 acres, you can find ways to be productive with a property that size if some type of agricultural production is your goal. In many ways, a 10 acre property does a lot to lower the bar on reaching sustainability, provided that it's the right 10 acres. Consequently, that leads us to our next topic.

5. Climate/Soil

Many people tend to start with this as a primary consideration. If you're planning to run a thriving cattle ranch or vineyard, this is crucial. But acquiring a property that fits perfectly into a commercial enterprise will cost you extra, much extra.

On the other hand, almost all regions from the desert to the pine forest have their own agricultural

or geological advantages which you can learn to take advantage of.

Goats can survive on almost any soil. Does the property have rock quarry potential? Lots of timber? Is it possible that you could use the resources on your property to build something valuable to your neighbors?

You can tailor your homesteading enterprise to suit the strengths of your individual property. In fact, that's what the smart landowner would do. You can think about it like wine regions almost, some vintners say that rocky, poor soils make the best grapes.

By the same token, just because the ranch a mile over has great soil for sauvignon grapes doesn't mean that your property will. Likewise, water resources are crucial to any farming activity you may have on your mind.

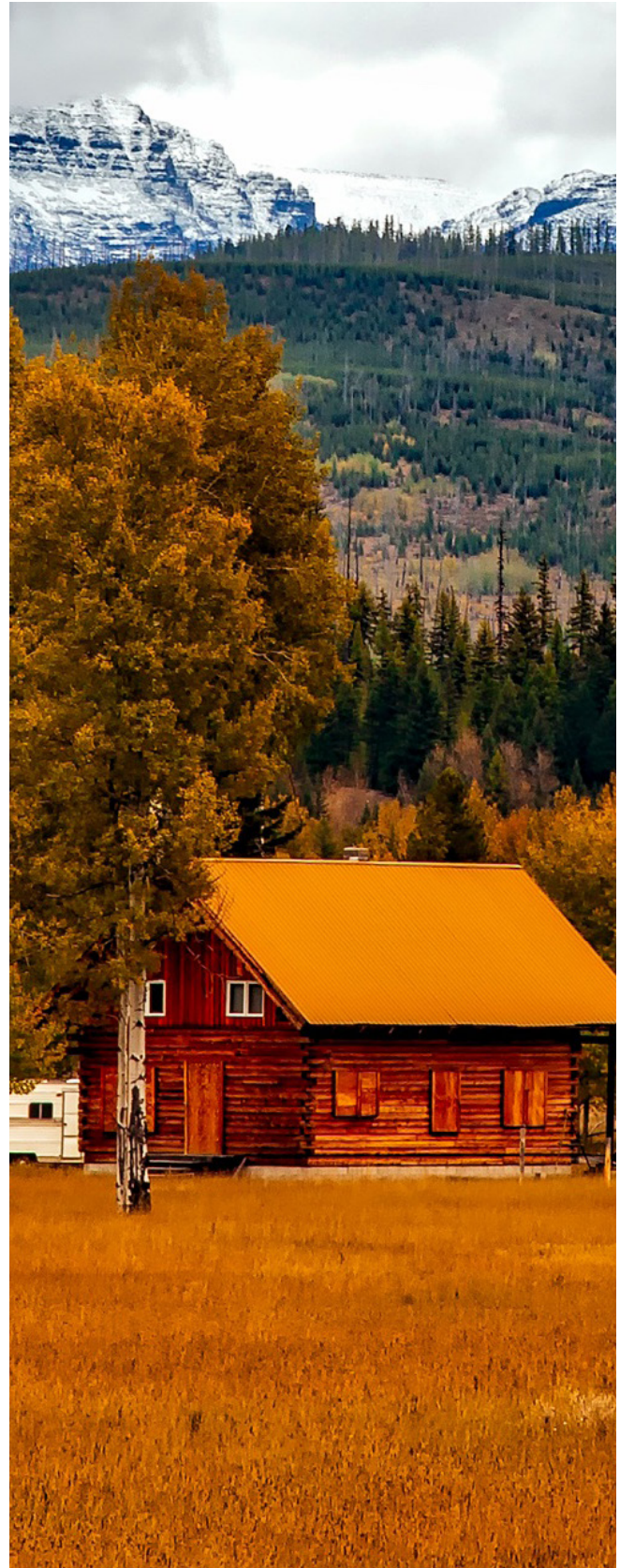
Proven ranches and farms demand a premium that most buyers simply can't afford to pay. This is exactly why we placed this fifth on the list. It's very important, and it relates directly to your goal (item #2). Still, learning to exploit the indigenous resources on a property is typically going to be easier and more cost-effective than trying to purchase a turnkey farm or ranch

The Right Property is the One You'll Keep

No matter how long you've dreamed of the day when you finally own your own piece of dirt, the reality will never be exactly the way you pictured it. That's why taking these factors into consideration is so important to the process.

If you carefully consider these things before you start searching for a property, you'll have a much more realistic picture of what you're getting for your money. Consequently, if your plans match up with the reality on the ground, you're less likely to experience unpleasant surprises.

A property that you've estimated and judged correctly is likely to be something you'll want to hold onto for years, maybe even for generations. Helping you achieve that level of success is our goal.



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