



MEMBERS UPDATE

January 2024

A large, detailed photograph of a brown chicken with a prominent red comb and wattle, standing in a snowy environment. The chicken is the central focus of the page, with its feathers and legs clearly visible against the white snow. A small portion of another chicken's head is visible on the left edge.

Raising Animals Off-Grid In Winter Climates

Debt-Free Home Building (How We Did It)

Best Upgrades And Accessories For Your Defensive Shooters

Death By A Thousand Papercuts: Adventures In Gun Grabbing

Next Issue: Debt-Free Home Building (How You Can Do It Too!)

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DOUBLE your accuracy...
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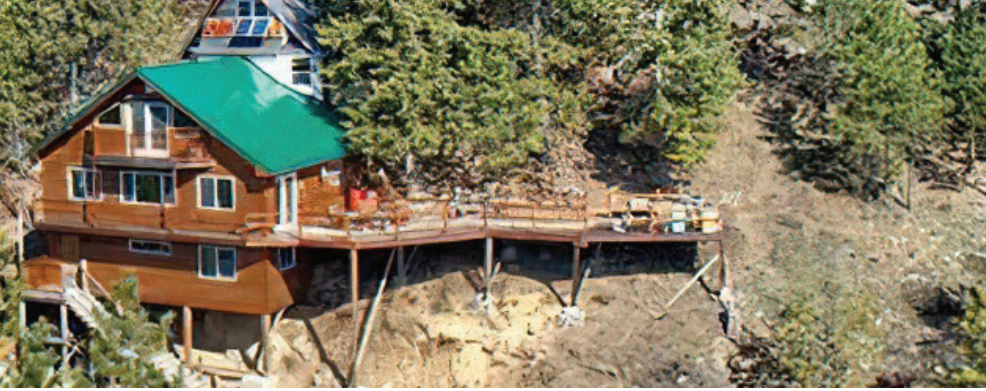


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Perhaps you have not yet considered one simple option that has been around for thousands of years when it comes to home ownership: build your own home! Having built two homes of my own, I can assure you that while it may seem an overwhelming— even impossible— prospect, it IS possible, and YOU can do it... and do so debt-free!



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Death By A Thousand Papercuts: Adventures In Gun Grabbing

2023 was a year that reinforced, with crystal clarity, why the founders made it necessary for the citizenry to be armed and ready to defend hearth and home from all enemies, foreign and domestic.

Next Issue: Debt-Free Home Building (How You Can Do It Too!)



Debt-Free Home Building (How We Did It)

With median home prices soaring to almost half a million dollars in 2022 and an average mortgage interest rate of 6.72%, the idea of purchasing a home has never been more daunting... but there is hope!

Most people don't consider one simple option that has been around for thousands of years: build your own home!

Having built two homes of my own, I can assure you that while it may seem an overwhelming— even impossible— prospect, it IS possible, and YOU can do it... and do so debt-free!



The Path Of Greater Resistance

You may protest, "I can't build an entire house myself!" I beg to differ! Before building our first cabin, my husband and I hadn't built anything more complicated than a small gazebo, but information and the ability to learn a new skill have never been so accessible. You can study just about anything with just a few keystrokes! You can research

everything from how-to videos to your local zoning, permitting, and building codes.



Our Story

With so many ways to get started, I will share our story with you. We had never considered trying to build a home ourselves until returning to Idaho after the Corps. We befriended a German man who encouraged (prodded) us... convincing us that it was "easy." Well, it certainly was not easy, but it was possible. Our first build was on a granite mountainside with a 30-degree slope that we had to dynamite into just to put in a "driveway." Everything we used had to be carried up the mountainside by hand— including all of the concrete for the foundation piers. Our property was inhospitable and was not at all "builder friendly," the only reason we could afford it.

My husband decided that we were going to buy some property and build a cabin. I had been working diligently to get us debt-free, but we were overpaying for the rental we lived in, had no savings, no credit, and were living off a small

military pension. I had little hope of ever seeing his plans come to fruition. Ah, ye of little faith! Good thing he had more vision and stick-to-itiveness than I did!

Months later, we purchased our first property, complete with a tiny, unfinished, 300 sq ft hunting cabin shell. We didn't have enough money so we did "Owner Carry," in which case a property owner carries the note on the property, and you pay directly to them until it is paid in full. It's a binding contract, made legal through an escrow company to protect both parties' interests. You may be thinking, "That doesn't sound 'debt-free'!" You're right! Our first property was not debt-free, but it was a "seed investment" that allowed us to start building debt-free; immediately gaining equity.

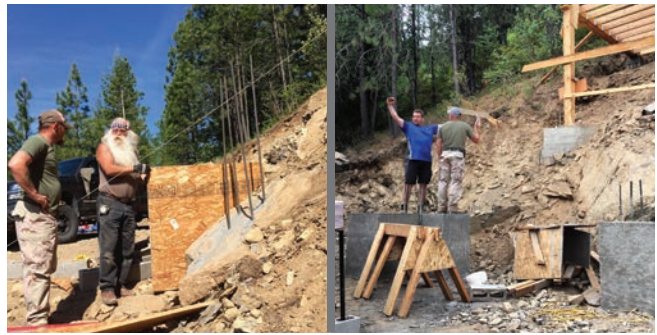
We then had the decision to make: Install utilities or begin building. Having a limited budget, we couldn't afford both. If we installed utilities, we couldn't afford to start building until next spring. Needing to get out of our rental home as soon as possible, we opted to start building. In April 2015, we broke ground on our property, bought a generator to run our power tools, and began building.

One Man's Loss Is Another Man's Gain



The previous year, a rogue windstorm had ripped through our area, decimating thousands of trees. There were so many trees down and so few people with the means to manage them that many offered them to anyone willing to remove them. We partnered with our German friend to remove the trees from these properties. We milled those that could be salvaged into usable lumber, and chopped into firewood those that couldn't. We used every beam and post to build our first cabin with the lumber we milled from those trees.

Besides utilizing books and YouTube, we also consulted my father and friends, who were knowledgeable about architectural engineering and construction. We spent hours planning, designing,



and figuring out our build plans. We spent many more hours poring over videos and books, and talking on the phone with people who knew more than we did, discussing ideas and troubleshooting issues we encountered. My dad came to Idaho a few times to teach us some basics: framing doors and windows properly, drilling into the mountainside, and setting rebar and forms for the concrete foundation pillars. We managed to get the cabin framed up, mostly dried in, and the sheeting on the roof by November, just four hours before the first snowfall.

Disappointingly, we didn't get as far along on the build as we'd hoped and decided to remain in our rental that winter; meanwhile, we continued to work on the inside of the cabin.

The following spring, we sold everything we could, submitted our vacate notice, and moved to our cabin. Still unable to afford utilities without bringing the build process to a screeching halt financially, we resolved to "rough it" for another year. We built an outhouse, used rain catchment for bathing, dish, and drinking water— filtered through our Berkey— used a 2-gallon solar camp shower, cooked on a BBQ grill, and built our cabin every day. Our budget was tight, so we only used the generator for building... consolidating everything else into the hours that the generator ran. Most of the time, we lived as the pioneers did, with oil lanterns and candles. We reserved our rechargeable lights for late-night visits to the outhouse.

Changing Gears

After only a few months, we realized we loved this simpler life and decided to remain off-grid permanently. I found a used 2,000W car inverter on Craigslist for \$20. We pulled the two batteries from our RV, brought them up to our cabin, tied them together, and connected them to the inverter;



we then connected a battery charger to them so that the batteries charged whenever the generator ran. We ran extension cords from the inverter and connected lamps with LED bulbs for additional lighting. We lived this way for eleven months before we felt we could afford to invest in a “luxury” and purchased our first solar panels. We started with the bare minimum: the \$20 Craigslist inverter, a tiny 10A charge controller, two 100W solar panels, and the same two RV batteries... It certainly was nothing to write home to Mom about, but it was more than enough to suit our needs.

Those first eleven months were transformational. They gave us insight into what we really could live without; by the time we installed our tiny 200W solar system, it was plenty. The main source of power consumption was interior lighting. Because we exclusively used LED bulbs, our little system was ample for our needs in the summer, and the small amount of solar we received in the winter was usually enough to get us by until we ran the generator while building.



The Hand Of The Diligent Makes Rich

We scoured Craigslist daily for free and cheap building materials. We regularly sifted through

bins at our local thrift shops, ReStore, and every yard sale we could find for items we could use to build our home. We helped people “clean up” their properties, hauled off building materials we could use, and dismantled old buildings to repurpose some of the materials. We kept an eye out for bargains, and friends and family members often told us of deals they came across. We frequently drove several hours one way to find discounted materials— often saving hundreds of dollars, even after calculating gas and travel.

My husband brought in extra money by buying cheap broken-down vehicles, fixing everything wrong with them, cleaning them up to pristine condition, and flipping them for a profit... something we affectionately refer to as “polishing a turd.” He didn’t limit himself to just cars and trucks, though. Nothing that could be fixed and resold was off the table: automobiles, boats, ATVs, campers, motorcycles, riding lawnmowers, you name it. He didn’t always sell them for cash. Oftentimes, he would barter. Sometimes, he would barter for building materials; other times, he would barter for other items he found in other areas that he would have an easier time selling in our area. I know not everyone has the skill sets we have, but if you think outside the box and are willing to put in the work, you are certain to come up with something you could do to earn a few extra dollars or trade with someone for something you need.



Another valuable tip: You never know when you might come across a deal you just can’t afford to pass up, so it’s important to have at least \$500 set aside for those occasional pop-up deals. For many months (especially in the beginning), that meant using our Share Checking Overdraft and taking our accounts into the negative. Sure, that isn’t technically debt-free, but semantics. It cost us \$30

to “borrow” \$600, which was repaid when we got paid the next month... but 5% interest on 30 (or less) days of debt invariably saved us hundreds—sometimes thousands!—of dollars. You will have to weigh the odds and decide for yourself if it is worth it. For us, it always was.

For example, our accounts were empty from purchasing building materials when my husband came across enough 6” cedar siding to side our entire cabin for \$400! We were far from ready for it, but at 11 cents a lineal foot, it was a once-in-a-lifetime deal we couldn’t afford to pass up! Along those lines, it wasn’t uncommon to find people wanting to get rid of things in the winter so they wouldn’t have to store them or take the risk of them being ruined by the weather. Months before we even had interior walls, we came across a guy selling enough interior cedar tongue and groove car siding discounted by more than 90% just to get it out of his lumber yard. Another bargain we could scarcely pass up.

We often had more materials and work than we could keep up with... at least until we began “finishing” work. That’s when things begin to get expensive. But, if you are willing to sacrifice a little or are frugal and patient, you can get everything you need for a fraction of the cost of buying new, or you can build it yourself— as we did our kitchen island countertop. Every door in our first cabin and all but one of our windows were either given to us by friends (renovations), purchased used— Craigslist, the ReStore, yard sales, etc.— or built by us. We spent less than \$500 for ten windows, two sets of exterior French doors, and our front door!



“Patience Is Bitter, But Its Fruit Is Sweet” - Aristotle

Keep in mind that not all of the materials that you use in your initial build may be your “forever” items. Several of the windows we purchased had issues. A couple of the double pane windows had blown seals and had dirt inside that couldn’t be cleaned; one of the slider panes on one window was cracked and would need to be replaced at some point in time... all minor inconveniences when considering the cost-benefit analysis. It was important to just “fill the holes” before winter arrived. Even with the leaky seals and a crack, those windows served their purpose! We could have just left those areas covered with OSB, but winter is dark enough without feeling like you are living in a cave. Considering what we paid, we felt it was money well spent! We knew we would be able to afford to replace them one day, but in the meantime, these less-than-desirable windows were functional and would allow us to divert our time and money to more important building matters.

Purchasing used windows and doors for your budget build is easier if you can manage to collect them all before you frame in the openings. Rather than finding inexpensive items with the precise size to fit your space, you can build your home around the window and door sizes you already have. With that in mind, I recommend you, at least, attempt to find fairly common sizes so that if you ever do need or want to replace those items in the future, you don’t end up having to order expensive custom sizes, and you will be more likely to find used replacements.

Something else to consider when bargain hunting is that beggars can’t be choosers. We often found windows that we loved and that fit our budget, but not all of them were the same color. This is nothing that a little sandpaper, masking tape, and a rattle-can of your desired color of spray paint can’t remedy.

Not all of the windows— or other items— we purchased “used” actually were. On several occasions, we bought windows that were practically brand new and had never been installed. Many professional home builders place orders for builds they are working on, miscalculate their needs, and end up with extra inventory. Oftentimes, when that happens, they will turn around and sell them for

pennies on the dollar. We also encountered a lot of really great deals on brand-new home-building materials from people who were renovating their homes and changed their minds about the materials they wanted to use. You just have to be diligent and scour the internet and sales. That is precisely how we ended up with FREE travertine in our bathroom!! A couple had been trying, unsuccessfully, to resell it on Craigslist and they just wanted it out of their way. They offered it to us for free in exchange for loading it and hauling it off for them. Score!



First Cabin Build



Second Cabin Build

Playing The Long Game

After five years, we sold our first (unfinished) cabin, paid cash for our new property, and had enough to start over. We also had money left to purchase a few amenities, such as a new dual-fuel generator and a small excavator, and to upgrade our solar (1000W)! Now, thanks to time, patience, and sacrifice, our current property and everything on it are 100% debt-free!

Sounds too good to be true? Well, it isn't easy, but it is true! Building debt-free on a tight budget isn't all sunshine and rainbows. You have to be willing to roll your sleeves up and work **HARD**. You have to sacrifice on almost every front. You are sore and tired most– if not all– of the time. Every dime goes

to building your home. You live in a constant state of building chaos, surrounded by tools, building materials, sawdust, etc. Everything takes forever to do when you do it yourself. You have no time for a social life, and you don't always get what you want right away... But eventually, you will! If you are willing to do what is necessary to get there, you, too, can build your home debt-free.



RAISING ANIMALS OFF-GRID IN WINTER CLIMATES

By Nikki Mulder

ONE SIZE DOESN'T FIT ALL

Raising animals—both as pets and for food—dates back as far as the beginning of recorded history; however, according to Wessels Living History Farm, the number of small farms declined by half in the 20 years between 1950 and 1970. In the years following, raising livestock became less popular, and the number of people who did so continued to decline. By the early 1990s, that number was reduced to fewer than ten percent of what it was before 1950! However, with much of what is going on in the world and some of the practices we are seeing within our government concerning many things—including our food supply—the past decade (or more!) has left many of us looking to become less reliant on outside sources and more self-sufficient. Accordingly, in recent years, we have seen an immense desire for people to become more self-sustainable and an explosive resurgence in the popularity of homesteads and personal gardens, and in the number of people wanting to raise livestock.

When it comes to raising animals, there is no universal method or fixed approach. There are many ways to cultivate the perfect environment for

your particular needs and those of the animals you choose to keep. However, whether you have a large established farm, a new homestead with just a few critters here and there, or something in between, there is one thing that holds true for all of them: Raising animals—as pets or for food—is both rewarding and challenging.



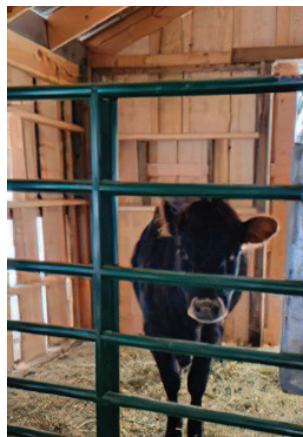
THE MEDIUM BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE AND IGNORANCE

There is never a shortage of opinions or tips on anything—especially online—and “how to raise animals” is no exception. However, I have found

the main focus tends to be on modern animal husbandry... you know, those folks with unlimited access to all that new-fangled technology, complete with all the modern bells and whistles like E-lek-tricity, running water, and such. Living off the grid myself, much of what these sites tend to recommend just isn't practical and sometimes isn't even feasible for my lifestyle.

To be fair, there are a lot of up-and-coming folks who have caught the "off-grid bug," and a few of them have even put out some really good information on raising animals off-the-grid; however, it seems most of them live in temperate climates chocked full of blustery winter temperatures dropping down into the 40s!!! Okay, okay... before anyone gets their knickers in a twist (as my granny used to say), that's just a little tongue-in-cheek for ya! The fact is, every clime and place comes with its own set of challenges, and truth be told, you would never catch me trying to survive the hot, humid summers down south while living off the grid. I subscribe to the notion that I can always bundle up more to get warm, but one can only get so naked! Which brings me to the point at hand... how DO you successfully raise animals in cold climates while living off the grid? I'm so glad you asked!

You know what they say, "That which doesn't kill us..." blah-blah-blah. Quite frankly, with that argument, I should make He-Man look like Tinkerbell these days, but I digress. The point I'm trying to make is that living off the grid is not for the faint of heart under the best of conditions, but its challenges are made that much more difficult when you are in a cold weather environment... especially when you are raising animals. Suddenly, simple everyday chores become tasks that not only call to question your sanity, but also challenge your resolve and commitment to this lifestyle—not to mention straining every one of your problem-solving muscles. Let's take a look at some of these and how we have adapted ourselves and our animals to these conditions.



BACK TO THE RULE OF THREES

Most of us are familiar with the Rule of Threes: The rule that says you can survive:

- 3 minutes without air
- 3 hours without shelter
- 3 days without water
- 3 weeks without food

That same concept (mostly) holds true for our domestic animals as well, but I'm going to address them a little differently than I would if I were discussing an emergency situation for humans.

"HAPPY IS THE HOUSE THAT SHELTERS A FRIEND"

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Proper shelter for the environment is a necessity of life. Obvious, right? The same principle that applies to people, applies to our animals. For this illustration, I have combined "air" and "shelter" as they are intertwined.

Most people are aware that an animal enclosure needs to be properly ventilated in the summer (for obvious reasons), but did you realize that it is equally as important in the winter? It is necessary to have proper ventilation in the winter for several reasons. Most obviously, it allows for fresh oxygen-rich air for breathing. This is especially important during those frigid days when it is necessary to keep your animals in their shelter—sometimes for days at a time—until temperatures rise to non-life-threatening levels. It also helps reduce the amount

of moisture and condensation inside the shelter. This is vital as damp environments pose a host of problems, from aiding and abetting frostbite to causing serious respiratory issues. Just as important, however, is that by keeping a good circulation of fresh air moving through the shelter, you will help cut down on airborne disease organisms and ammonia buildup. The species of animal you are housing will determine what kind of shelter and how much ventilation is required. I won't get into specifics here, but a good rule of thumb for most animal shelters is to provide proper ventilation, clean, dry bedding, and an area where they can get out of the weather... especially the wind.

Most of the questions I receive about raising off-grid animals pertain to fowl (I currently have chickens, ducks, turkeys, and quail). I want to address a few of the most popular ones here:

Them: "How do you run a heat lamp or extra light for your chickens in the winter when on solar?"

Me: "I don't."

Them: "But, Nikki!!... They will freeze to death without one!"

Me: "False!"

If given the proper food and living conditions, your fowl are quite capable of acclimating to winter environments. There may be a few exceptions to that here and there as, just like with us humans, there is no one-size-fits-all solution for how to care for animals.

Them: "But what about egg production? When my power goes out and I can't run my light or my heat lamp, my ladies stop laying... sometimes for the entirety of the winter. You can't get eggs in the winter unless they are warm and have extra light to stimulate egg production!"

Me: "False!"

I, too, used to be under this erroneous assumption. Think about it... did the pioneers of old keep lanterns in their coops or barns for their animals? I think not. The truth is, my off-grid ladies lay

year-round. Production may decrease when temperatures reach the negatives, but other than that, my hens generally provide the same or a couple of fewer eggs per day in the winter compared with what I get in the summer. All of my off-grid ladies have consistently produced much better than my pampered on-grid ladies ever did.



THE DRIVING FORCE OF ALL NATURE

The biggest test of my resolve to live off-grid in a winter climate comes from water. Whether it's water for us or our animals, managing water in the winter poses the most significant challenge to most northern climate off-gridders. Unless you have a rather substantial solar array (which we do not), trying to keep water thawed in subzero temperatures can sometimes seem an exercise in futility, compounded for us by the lack of running water inside our home. However, that can also be a blessing.

Running water inside an off-grid home during winter can be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, you have relatively easy access to an abundance of water at your fingertips. On the other hand, you now have to be ever mindful of the increased potential for frozen water pipes, something that is not always easily done when on limited power.

For the past seven years, we have collected rain drawn from our creek, occasionally carried water in from outside sources, and melted snow for all our water needs... to include those of our animals. As you can imagine, it is labor-intensive and even more so in the winter; we either have to break through the ice at the creek (if it is not already frozen solid)

or collect snow for melting. Collecting snow for water use poses its own set of challenges. First, it is important to have a reliable source of clean snow from which to draw—avoiding yellow snow! Then, you have to melt that snow down to water—a task that is quite demanding when you consider the ratio of snow-to-water conversion.

According to the National Weather Service, you can expect somewhere in the vicinity of one inch of water for every 10–12 inches of snow. We can generally expect to get less than one gallon of water out of every five-gallon bucket of snow we melt. As you can see, converting snow to usable water requires quite a bit of time, patience, and commitment, but it is not impossible.

When the weather is above or hovers around the freezing point, it is not too difficult to keep up with the animals' water. Generally, we water them in the morning and then again in the afternoon/early evening. Because the ducks are constantly playing in their water, it tends to stay relatively ice-free; however, when it starts to reach negative temperatures, even their water requires more attention on our part. I like to keep a ball in each of the other animal's watering bowls just to help keep the water from developing an ice layer over the top. The size of the ball used is determined by the size of the animal. It just needs to be large enough that it can't be accidentally swallowed by the animal and keeps the surface area of the water moving to some degree. Sometimes, the wind helps with this, other times it is the motion created on the surface water by the animal drinking or nudging the ball out of the way to get a drink.

When temperatures plummet far below freezing, keeping our animals watered becomes a bit more challenging... and borders on a full-time job, depending on the number of animals being cared for. In this case, we take warm—not hot water (due to something called the “Mpemba effect”: hot water's molecular composition more closely resembles frozen water vs. its cold water counterpart)—that has been heated on top of the wood stove out to all our animals several times throughout the day. While we don't want to use hot water, it does need to be warm enough to maintain

Depending on temperatures, we may need to do this up to four or five times a day to ensure they maintain proper hydration. Hydration is equally as important in the winter as it is in the summer. While hydration guards against heat casualties in summer, conversely so, it guards against hypothermia and frostbite in the winter.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT... AND SUSTENANCE

Just as water is vital to our animals' well-being, so is food... even more so in the winter. We choose to free-range our animals as much as possible, but having several feet of snow on the ground for 6 months out of the year makes it necessary for us to provide the bulk share of their food for most of the year. Regardless of whether you free-range your animals or keep them contained, it's important to furnish them with a proper nutrient-dense diet. This is especially important in the winter when cold, snow, and ice hinders our animals from supplementing their diets on their own. When it comes to feeding animals who reside in harsher winter regions, the most important consideration next to the quality of nutrient intake is to ensure they get enough food... especially when the temperatures plummet to arctic levels. It is vital to our animals' well-being to acquire a high enough caloric intake to maintain their core body temperature to prevent hypothermia and/or frostbite. That will vary from animal to animal.

Our standard is to provide our animals with as much food as they can eat throughout the day—providing extra food during especially cold snaps. Some of the animals, such as all of our fowl, have open feeders (outside the coop) that are always full of grain that they can eat as they see fit. We

continue to free-range them in the winter, so they do still occasionally find additional sources of supplementation here and there, and as they are easily distractible, they manage to find plenty of other interesting things to help keep their heads from being buried in the feeder all day. The exception to this is when the temperatures drop to single and negative digits and we keep them all in their respective coops. With the other animals, we just increase their daily portions as needed. Sometimes, this requires us to go out more often throughout the day to check on how their feed is progressing. We know we are dispensing the proper quantity of food when there is a small amount left over by the time we close everyone up for the

evening. Except for one of our spoiled dogs—who would eat until his stomach needs to be pumped, and then eat more—we have found this to be an effective practice with all our animals.

In my experience, the facts speak for themselves: If given proper care—food, shelter, water, and love—off-grid animals are better producers and hardier than their on-grid counterparts... not unlike their pioneer ancestors, who I imagine had to be pretty resilient and determined to survive. Especially those being raised in rugged winter environments.





Best Upgrades And Accessories For Your Defensive Shooters

By Eric Austgen

Many professions throughout the world depend upon life safety systems or equipment in order for jobs to be completed with zero to minimal loss of life. These various professionals have strict procedures they follow to ensure their gear is in top-notch shape to see them home safely at the end of the shift. This type of thinking should be no different for the EDC citizenry, as your sidearm should always be considered a life support system, one that needs to be fine-tuned to have an extra edge over the ne'er do wells of the world. We will take a look at some upgrade and accessory options that you may have been needing or didn't even know you needed.

Love At First Sight



switch out the factory iron sights for ones that will allow you to easily acquire your target and improve accuracy. The problem with factory sights is that you will always need to take a moment to zero the target each time you pull due to the fact the rear sight can only be adjusted for windage, not elevation, which can be a real pain if you have multiple EDC shooters you like to rotate through or you have to shoot at a distance quickly. The advantage of aftermarket sights is the shooter's ability to adjust for both windage and elevation as well as clean up the sight picture, bringing together a perfect marriage of target acquisition and accuracy without hesitation on the shooter's part. The best all-round sights for night and day carry are the Trijicon HD night sights. They are offered in different heights, styles, and colors for shooters with particular tastes. These sights furnish the shooter with a precise sight picture and improved low-light performance due to the self-luminous three-dot night sight set with a line of photoluminescent paint for faster target acquisition. The rear sight is a notched U that is angled and serrated to reduce glare and help the shooter line up the front sight. For those of you interested in red dot sights, Trijicon has the RMR RM06 Type 2 red dot sight available. This particular sight has a 3.25-MOA

12 Whether you are a veteran gun owner or just taking the plunge for the first time, it would be wise to

that is LED-powered and manually adjustable, the controls of which are mounted on either side of the sight. The sight is built of solid aluminum, with the front hood designed to disperse the energy of any impact down the walls of the hood into the base, thus keeping the glass from falling out or cracking. Glare is reduced by a stepped-down area between the emitter and glass. As with the HD night sights, these come in a variety of colors, sizes, and power options. The advantage of the red dot system, especially on compact models, is that it will be easier to sight the target when rapidly firing your weapon because the red dot will never leave your field of view. That is, of course, if you have mastered grip and recoil control, otherwise known as the only gun control recognized by the 2A.

Easy Easy Lemon Squeezy



For the most part, trigger modifications should really only be done if one is shooting in competitions or the like for the competitive edge. It is logical to see how it would aid in EDC. However, I have heard from other shooters that they ended up putting the factory set back in because their fancy new upgrade had crapped out on them in the middle of drills, and that's the concern - failing to perform at a critical moment. The best thing one can do is to get some snap caps for their particular caliber weapon and start drying and firing it. This will actually accomplish a great many things. You will get a load of practice in for various disciplines, i.e., drawing, clearing jams and misfires, reloading, and anything else you can think of. However, the unseen benefit is that you are wearing the firearm's inner workings and smoothing them down naturally to the point that you are satisfied with the pull

weight. One may speed up the former process by breaking the weapon down and polishing the trigger components. Sure, it saves time, but you miss out on all that valuable practice. If you are so inclined to do so, you may buy a drop-in system consisting of a trigger bar, shoe, and connector.

Being In Control



The next upgrades are really dependent on the shooter or, rather, the shooter's hand size. For those whose hands have a good grip but lack the sufficient digit stretch to release the slide or magazine while maintaining said grip, you would do well to consider an extender for both releases. Now, these two features are not limited to those with shorter digits but also for those who feel it's comfortable and works for them. The EDC shooter should be aware that if the firearm is placed on a table on the release side, there is a potential for the magazine to inadvertently pop out of the gun. This can be remedied by reducing the release profile with whatever abrasive material of your choice.

Ergonomic And User Friendly



As with all firearms, it will be important for the weapon to feel comfortable in the hands or arms of the shooter, lest it end up being an expensive paperweight or doorstop. There are a few

modifications one may do to improve the overall performance and interaction with their sidearm.

Some shooters have a problem finding the perfect handgun, only to discover that their hand doesn't quite fit all the way on the grip. Instead of thinking grip extenders, travel a little north on the grip and consider getting a trigger guard undercut. Not only will you be able to "choke" up on the grip, but this will allow you a higher on-the-grip shooting experience by placing the fingers closer to the bore, thereby increasing recoil management and sight tracking through greater grip control.

Lingering in the grip area, one should consider texturing or adding Talon grips for better consistent hold by the shooter. It does one no good to be constantly adjusting their grip after every shot. The human inclination to sweat in stressful situations is also another consideration, as the palms of one's hands aren't exempt from this natural bodily response. The most efficient texture is on the front and backstrap of the pistol, giving the needed grip consistency. However, a fully textured grip might be advisable for those who don't want to leave anything to chance. Talon grips are available for those who don't want to modify their grip permanently. These are adhesive-backed grip pads with surfaces ranging from smooth rubber to coarse texturing that can be easily applied anywhere on the grip. These grips are designed for specific patterns and models of firearms. The nice thing is that they can be easily replaced or switched if they wear out or you want to try something different.

Speaking of extra grip on your weapon, the addition or enhancement of forward and rear slide serrations would be a great idea. These serrations will greatly enhance any single-handed manipulation situation, even if you are not wearing shooting gloves. The forward serrations are usually found or applied on the top of the slide just behind the front sight. The rear serrations should already be milled on the sides of the slide, flanking the rear sight. These serrations should be milled with deeper valleys and narrower peaks so they can get a solid but gentle purchase with the meat of your hand. This upgrade should be worked into your budget due to its CYA insurance policy in any worst-case scenario.

If you have become grip crazy and want to cover every appropriate surface available, you should look into the index points. On most pistols, there is usually an area forward of the takedown lever where one can rest the supporting hand's thumb. I have been told that this is the accelerator pedal of the pistol, as the harder one presses down, the faster one shoots. Placing some texturing on the opposite side will serve as an index point for your trigger finger when practicing proper trigger discipline.

Extending Downward



If you aren't too crazy about doing a trigger guard undercut or it just doesn't feel right, you may look to magazine well extenders to better lock your shooting hand to grip. The problem with most mag well extenders is that the high point created by it will give away the fact you are carrying when doing it concealed, which would defeat the entire purpose of stealth and secrecy. Many low-profile mag wells on the market will have you spending more on covering the company costs rather than delivering anything close to top-of-the-line performance. However, that is not necessarily the case with every mag well out there. Those of you who own Glock 19s might be interested in the mag well offered by Agency Arm. It is machined from 6061 aluminum and is anodized in a Type 3 hard coat, which makes it sturdy enough to handle the rigors of daily duty or carry. The mag well is streamlined to position the hand up under the trigger guard. There is also a small funnel that helps with reloading.

Before we leave the Glock mag well subject, it is worth pointing out that a grip plug should also be purchased in order to seal off the channel running up the backstrap because there are sensitive trigger components at the end of the channel. The grip plug is also useful for aiding in smooth magazine reloads due to the shape and design of the plug,

which prevents the rim of the cartridge from snagging on the mag well rear.

Increased Lead Slinging Ability



Barrels live in a bit of a gray area when it comes to whether one should switch the one from the factory or step it up to a match-grade option. This upgrade should be considered if you are confident that you can outshoot your pistol's mechanical accuracy. Those who own Glocks that are third generation or older and earlier model Smith & Wesson M&P's won't need to think twice about dropping a match barrel into their shooter. The folks over at KKM Precision produce a fine barrel that these gun owners should have a look at. These barrels have a thirty percent increase in accuracy over the factory Glock barrel and lock up tighter without decreasing the firearm's reliability. The KKM barrels also have the added benefit of allowing the shooter to run lead projectiles through it, something that can not be done with the Glock's polygonal barrel. For those of you who have other model pistols and are itching to switch out barrels, I would recommend that you find out if one is available for your shooter, and if so, research the manufacturer's information on performance or hit up friends locally or online that may be of help. You may be able to find useful information on many of the internet discussion boards relating to the matters of barrel performance. However, whatever your choice may be, it should never impair the performance or operation of the firearm.

Putting Them In The Spotlight

Even though a low-light sight upgrade will help in a variety of situations, it will be of zero use to you in absolute dark conditions. This is where a light that is reliable and bright enough to burn your retinas out will be the order of the day. The best



lights to look into are low-profile, high-intensity lights that will stay out of the way when drawing and holstering while shining a brilliant light on whatever subject needs closer study. I have always been partial to Streamlights' line of products; however, the XC1-B from SureFire is a neat light designed with the compact carrier in mind. It has a one-and-one-half hour running time on a single triple A battery while producing a 350-lumen beam. This light is the width of the firearm's frame and fits flush with the muzzle. This light does well for low-light situations in places that have other passive light sources.

In scenarios or places where it seems as if all available light sources have been swallowed into the inky blackness of night or you want to be damn sure what you're shooting at, SureFire has a model X300 Ultra pistol light that mounts to the pistol's universal rail. Two models are available, including the cleverly named A and B variations. The only difference between the two is that the A has a plastic rail grabber mount as opposed to the B variant's metal T-slot mount. Both lights put out an intense white 1,000-lumen light that will be more than sufficient to shine a bright beam into those who possess a heart of darkness.

The Payload You Deliver



One generally doesn't consider ammo to be an upgrade; however, the cartridges you run through your mahoska will be just as important as the upgrades to the firearm. The only advice

I can recommend when it comes to ammo is to familiarize yourself with the factory specifications of your firearm to determine the hottest round you may put through it safely. Once you have figured this out, research can be done into defensive rounds loaded for that specific need or firearm. You should then do a sampler of ammo and head out to the range to try out different loads and slugs until you find the one that has the potential to penetrate deep enough to inflict the maximum amount of damage in a tight grouping without sacrificing accuracy. This is the fun part of the upgrade, as you will be able to bring all of your upgrades together to form a perfect union with your ammo.

These simple upgrades show that one can improve their EDC shooter without adding any attention, getting bells and whistles, or paying through the nose for them. The simple aesthetics, lines, and functionality are enough to attract even the most ardent of bling lovers. The form and function will be of utmost importance to any upgrade; however, on a more personal and psychological level, it will be important for the shooter to have the peace of mind that the upgrades they choose will give them an enhanced advantage over any adversary. These upgrades, along with the proper practice and training, will firmly cement confidence in the shooter's mind that their choices concerning the firearm will make it perform above and beyond the call of duty each time it must be employed defensively. So, until next time, dear reader, stay safe and let's be careful out there.



DEATH BY A THOUSAND PAPER CUTS: ADVENTURES IN GUN GRABBING

BY ERIC AUSTGEN

Greetings and salutations, dear reader! If you are reading this, then you have successfully survived the holidays and, more importantly, the previous year. And what a year it was! I could take a moment to reminisce, but we all lived through it, and could probably recall certain events if pressed. What I will say is that it was certainly a year that reinforced, with crystal clarity, why the founders made it necessary for the citizenry to be armed and ready to defend hearth and home from all enemies, foreign and domestic. Most pointedly, it was to ensure the same citizens had a tool to keep the government in check and on the straight and constitutional narrow, and to remind those representing us that their contractual obligations could be revoked at any time should tyranny even enter into the picture. I haven't gotten a whiff of full-on tyranny, but with some of the garbage that spews from these banshees' mouths, one can't help but feel like they are collectively chomping at the bit to enact martial law and finally drive the final nail into the constitution's coffin. We aren't at that point yet, but the sneaky mutants are still chipping away at the one right that will not only protect the other nine lives but also one's keister when the thunder is called down upon them. So we will check out what the feds and states

cooked up concerning guns this past year to inflict on us before the election year snowjob.

ROT FROM THE TOP

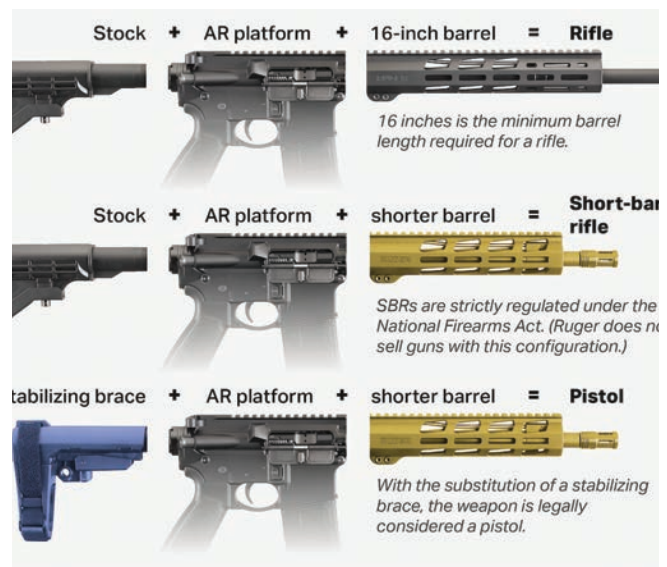


Since the mid-term elections, there has been relatively little in any upfront legislation concerning firearms. The only time these career criminals start rattling the sabers against guns is whenever a shooting occurs that can be politically capitalized upon, and then the talking points are fed to the various "grassroots" anti-gun groups so that these paid harpies can spread all the rhetoric and lies they can to impugn guns and the owners. The call for a ban on "assault weapons" is still being heard and is about as grating on the ears as a couple of alley cats getting to know each other. I guarantee that

after the last one was allowed to die a natural death, there will be no attempts to resurrect it due to the election and an uptick in global tensions, plus if the last poll I saw can be trusted, 62% of Americans really don't give a tinker's damn about gun control right at this very moment. But for all the sound and fury that emanates from their skull caves to distract the easily distracted, the gun-hating ghouls in the sewers of Congress have been quietly burying gun control language in bills that have nothing to do with firearms, much like their beloved pork.

One such bit of deceit concerns the extension of the Undetectable Firearms Act of 1988 within the National Defense Authorization Act. The former act made all firearms illegal that didn't show up on an x-ray machine or metal detector. Their intent is to modernize and permanently codify the law in the NDAA, which will ultimately lead to further abuse of law-abiding gun owners through unchecked sweeping legislation that will continue to get at said owners without effecting an outright ban and confiscation scheme. Many firearms manufactured with polymer would be targeted, as would the individuals who legally own these weapons. It should be noted that nothing occurred in 1988 to necessitate this act and it has never been used in the ensuing years. As of this writing, the act has yet to expire, scheduled for Dec 2023, and I haven't heard a peep as to any further actions since Congress has continued in its time-honored tradition of doing diddly this past year. Also, please be aware that efforts are being made at the federal level to add more misdemeanor offenses to the list of those prohibited from owning a firearm. I had read that snippet of information earlier in the year; however, when I returned to the site to get the details, the story was nowhere to be found. Big surprise! That isn't the first nor will it be the last time that happens, especially when the new social media intern didn't get the memo about playing it close to the vest.

I'm sure all of my readers who own pistol braces have been paying close attention to the shenanigans being perpetrated by an illegal alphabet agency and an unelected attorney general. For those of you who took a passing glance at this one, it will basically recategorize pistol stabilizing braces as short-barreled rifles, placing it squarely under

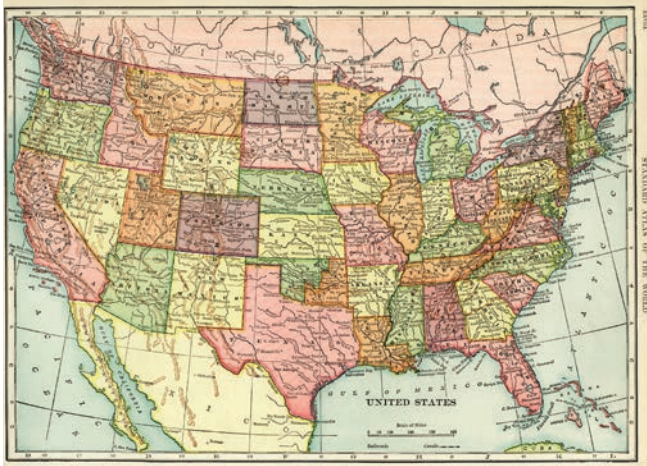


without paying the proper extortion fee and getting a tax stamp in exchange would result in untold amounts of law-abiding citizens being turned into criminals overnight. So these gangsters will give you an out, youse can do one of tree tings, ok? Register it wit da feds, get rid of it, make it so it don't go on the roscoe again, and if you can't take the whole ting apart, well, kiss your iron goodbye, pally. As you can imagine, a flurry of lawsuits went flying across the country to stop this outright gun and cash grab. The most recent ruling on the stabilizer ban came from a U.S. District Court judge who found it unconstitutional. However, that ruling applied only to the plaintiffs in the case before him, not the rest of the brace-owning populace. Stay tuned, as this thing is liable to heat up a bit more as more people start aggressively flexing their right to sue these rights-infringing clowns into oblivion.

While there can be no doubt that the lack of outright gun control legislation is attributed to the lawmaking grifters' desire to hold on to their plush positions, it seems as if the regime's agenda is not being met at the pace and speed set out by their reptilian masters, so it was no surprise when Mr. "Both barrels" announced the creation of a new federal Office of Gun Violence Prevention. Sounds pretty innocent and helpful, right? Anything but. I waded into the muck of mainstream media, one of the big three alphabet giants, to find out the exact language used to describe the office and its function. Through all the swooning, fawning, and girlish squealing from the supporters of this office, the one word consistently used was "epidemic." Yup, they have been describing gun "violence" as some sort of public health crisis for years, and now

they have figured out a back door to try and take guns away from people by simply appealing to the bleeding hearts through language manipulation and arguing that it will all be for the “greater good” if no one was armed, one big happy kumbaya utopia in their opinion. The problem is that they can now “tackle this epidemic from a whole-of-government approach” should a state or city call upon this office for whatever reason. It’s amazing what these bucket mouths admit when they think no one’s listening or paying attention. This office was announced back in October and is still in its infancy, so it is likely that they will quietly slip back into the shadows to work on their nefarious machinations now that it has been announced.

THE SKINNY ON THE STATES



I am sure many of you can rattle off without great difficulty the states in this country that thoroughly loathe and have open contempt for the citizens that reside there. It is pretty obvious they feel this way, considering they have absolutely no problem with restricting or outrightly banning the most effective tool for self-defense. I know I would feel like I had been left to twist in the wind, especially if I was a vulnerable member of society that would be easy pickins for the elements of the world that would have no problem securing a firearm anywhere at any time for the right price. Two laws my home state passed and then were immediately challenged in court sought to restrict all firearm purchases to twenty-one and older and the absolutely infuriating, ineffective three-day waiting period. The waiting period sponsor has a cranial rectal inversion problem and is one of the biggest gun grabbers we are burdened with here. Suffice it to say, every

state that has an infiltration of gun grabbers in the legislative chamber and chief executive’s office is guaranteed to be working overtime and with great expediency to effectively neuter the 2A or go for the gusto and kill it outright.



The figures given by state and federal sources reported that at least 400 bills at the state level this past year concerned firearms. Many of these bills died, were tabled, or sent to a committee for further study. Honk! Honk! Look out for that government gridlock! The historically gun-hating state of Illinois has really jumped the shark on their “assault weapons” ban. The ban makes it illegal to possess, sell, purchase, transport, deliver, sell, think about, look at, touch, or drool over an assault weapon or assault weapon attachment, and they have now made the .50 caliber rifle and its cartridge the new boogeyman. Reading House Bill 5471 gives one the idea that these guys were super serious in their duty to define an assault weapon but ended up describing every semi-auto firearm and aftermarket accessory under the sun, and to give everyone the warm and fuzzies, they limited the magazine capacity to 10 rounds. Because everybody knows that evildoers will totally follow the letter of the law or just bring extra mags. As you can imagine, this bill set off a horseapple storm of epic proportions to the point that towns and counties declared themselves areas of sanctuary for firearms and refused to enforce the ban with the Illinois State Sheriffs Association, filing an amicus brief in support of those challenging the bill. A judge in Macon County deemed it unconstitutional, setting it up for a direct appeal to the State Supremes. Of course, there were lawsuits filed by private citizens as well. However, district court judges got in on the fun and said it was in no way repugnant to the Constitution. The Federal Supremes agreed with them, as did the Illinois robes, so long story short, gun owners got the short end of the stick on this one.

The gun thieves in Rhode Island (HB5300) and Tennessee (SB1569 & HB1579) are attempting to do the same thing as Illinois. The wording of the bills may be different, but the descriptions and prohibitions are almost mirror images. Washington residents, you have nothing but my sympathy for what that weasel dictator of a governor is doing to your gun rights. A dull throb began behind my eyes to almost a full-blown migraine when reading HB1240 and its affront to the citizens of Washington. This one was effective immediately after Jaydolph signed it. Please read it just to get a sense of how off the rails the people that “We The People” elected have gone. The bill restricts 60 different firearms, with the majority of them being popular choices for hunting, sporting, and defense. Another big shock, huh? The rest of it is nitpicking legalese that leaves one feeling tired and sad. Lawsuits were filed, but in an exercise of corruption that would make Illinois jealous, not one single judge in Washington sided with the plaintiffs and refused to issue injunctions or restraining orders in the cases. Good luck and Godspeed to you all up there in the Pacific Northwest; you’ll need it.

SO WHAT’S THE GOOD WORD?

So far, it seems like our discussion has been more doom and gloom than sunshine and lollipops. That is true; however, some headway is being made in supporting the 2A in a few states. This past year, Florida and Nebraska became the 26th and 27th states to become constitutional carry states, thus affirming their citizens’ right to defend themselves without playing “Mother, may I?”. Louisiana was on track to pass constitutional carry, but the bill was deferred in June due to objections over several amendments that were not supported. If you live down that way, give the state house a call and tell them to get to work. Constitutional carry and national reciprocity are extremely vital to protecting the 2A and the citizens it serves. Speaking of national reciprocity, it’s being reviewed in a committee the last I checked, which means this isn’t going to see the light of day until more 2A-friendly candidates are elected, which might be several lifetimes from now. South Carolina has a constitutional carry bill that the senate still needs to vote on, yet another bunch of inactive desk

mammals that could use a flood of phone calls to prod them into action, that is, if your rep actually cares about their constituents or the bill to actually do anything.

The state of West Virginia did its college students a solid by passing concealed carry on all campuses this past year. The law will go into effect this year at the beginning of July. Interestingly, up until March of last year, there were thirteen states that required a permit to carry, something the original thirteen would never have put up with or even considered. North Carolina recently extricated itself from this nightmare, but not without first circumventing the governor’s veto by voting to override the woefully misguided soul’s decision. Once overridden, the bill immediately became law. Another section of the law allows permit holders to carry firearms on certain school campuses at certain times. This section of the law went into effect last month.

The past year has been extremely instructive about the importance of private ownership of firearms and the need to aggressively protect these rights. We could sit here and rehash events throughout history to reinforce one’s clarity on this issue, but history is sepia-toned and has cataracts. The events that touched off the lopsided genocide in the Middle East are much more in focus and coming through in Technicolor. Many people were under the impression that with the requirement of two years of service in the IDF and retaining the weapon afterward, Hamas terrorists should have been eliminated almost immediately after launching their attack. Sadly, this is not the case as Israel’s gun laws were thrust into the spotlight a few days after the attack. Citizens holding a permit are only allowed one firearm, usually a small arm, one magazine, and 20 rounds of ammo. However, only a small percentage of the population takes advantage of this “privilege”. This display of wholesale homicide on the world stage clearly illustrates why the United States has the 2A, as it does the hatred and admiration of some nations because of it. So, until next time, dear reader, stay safe and let’s be careful out there.

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