

It has to be said that I do like 410 shotguns and have been using them for more years than I care to remember. Light, handy and with modest recoil, if criticism could be levelled against the calibre it would be the noise it makes. Some say it's not powerful enough, but as with all things to do with shooting live game, it's more about knowing the gun/cartridges limitations and abilities. So for close/mid range rabbits and hares I find it ideal, likewise for shooting squirrels and rats. Feed it solid slug ammo and it becomes a highly affective short range fox stopper too.

As a gamekeeper a lot of my work is done at night and all the firearms in

my collection are moderated, which I consider most practical. Some of this is down to not spooking potential targets and others just simply not to annoy the neighbours, which can be equally important. So if you can make a 22 LR or even centrefire quieter, why can't you do the same to a smoothbore? Well you can, and my first experience with a moderated shotgun came from the Saddlery & Gun Room, a company that specialises in silencing smoothbores.

Two years ago in conjunction with the Editor (Pete Moore) I tested their 12-bore Hushpower, which is based on a Mossberg 500 pump-action. Effective to a degree - though a shotgun blast does carry much further than even a high power rifles crack - the sheer size and weight of the 12-gauge gun I felt

was prohibitive. Plus for best results sub-sonic cartridges are to be preferred.

Little Peach

Currently I own a Mossberg 410 pump, which I do like for the aforementioned reasons. Though when I bought it, it came with a 24", Cylinder-choked barrel, which does restrict effective range a little, which on a smaller cartridge such as the 410 is not ideal. Try as I might I have not been able to get a full choke tube to replace it. So when Pete asked me if I would like to test the 410 Hushpower I was very happy to oblige.

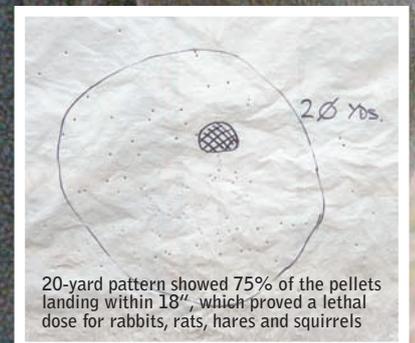
The Hushpower system is permanently fitted to the barrel, so you don't need a separate slot for a moderator and the gun can be bought as a Sect 2 on a standard SGC. As I already own a 410 Mossberg I knew what to expect

The Sweetest Thing



No surprises with the Mossberg 500 action, which uses a skeletonised shell lifter, which makes clearing the occasional stoppage much easier

Professional game keeper Andrew Johnson takes the Saddlery & Gun Room's fully moderated 410 pump-action shotgun out and finds he does not want to give it back



20-yard pattern showed 75% of the pellets landing within 18", which proved a lethal dose for rabbits, rats, hares and squirrels

in terms of controls and layout, but in comparison to the 12-bore version the little 410 was an absolute peach.

Yes I agree it does look long with that massive drainpipe of a can up front, but it doesn't feel that bad or heavy, for that matter, and the gun swings and points surprisingly well. Now to the nuts and bolts.

The Mossberg 500 (Mossy) series are nice pump-actions, not perhaps in the same league as Remington's 870 in terms of looks and build, but tough and reliable. The receiver is hi-strength aluminium alloy with an ambidextrous sliding safety catch located at the rear of the action almost on the tang. This is most practical as your thumb is almost on it when you make your firing grip. This is more preferable to a cross-bolt system as used by Remington and just about every one else.

The Mossy loads from underneath in the accepted manner though uses a skeletonised shell lifter, which makes the sorting of the rare feed stoppage an absolute doddle compared to a solid design. Just by the trigger is the unlocking button, which allows you to open the action with the mechanism locked and a live round in the chamber.

Build-wise the stock is plain light wood with the butt showing a ventilated recoil pad. The pump slide is quite square and gives a lot to get hold of. Though a Sect 2 (2 + 1 capacity) the 500 shows a long mag tube, which has been crimped to comply. I believe you can get Sect 1 (unrestricted) guns too.

The barrel is full choked, which is my preference for a 410 and has a ventilated rib on top.

Unlike a comparable

moderated firearm the barrel does not stop at the start of the can but goes well inside. Gas transfer to the moddy is done by ports through the barrel wall and in this way you can still achieve decent velocities by maintaining tube length. Sighting, if you need it, is facilitated by a plain brass bead at the front/top of the can. Armed with a cross section of 410 ammo it was time to see what it was about.

Handling

Although this Mossy may look overly long and ungainly, it handles very well indeed. When shooting bolting rabbits it was fast and responsive, allowing shots to be taken instinctively, and the can did not prove to be detrimental to the handling capabilities. However the eye could be drawn by the extra high bead and lump of pipe added and it took a bit of getting used to in the beginning. The main thing I found with shooting sitters was the need to allow for the bead

being mounted on the can, this said the gun seemed to shoot high anyway.

The moderator worked very well, completely taking out the distinctive crack that a 410 makes. There are subsonic cartridges on the market from Eley in the form of 3" magnums loaded with 16 grams of #6 shot; these were compared to both standard velocity 2 1/2" and 3" magnums. As far as perceived noise was concerned there appeared to be no difference between the three, the only difference was really in performance; as one might expect the subsonics did not seem to have the grunt behind them that the others did. This made little difference when shooting at close range targets but when taking rather longer shots their lack of speed and energy showed through.

To really put the can to the test I took the shotgun one night to some fields that we have a large problem with rabbits. There are houses on two sides, whose occupants complain at the slightest sound after dark. It is now one week later and no complaints have been received, except from the rabbit population as 37 of their number never returned from their night feed.

Performance Proved

This leads us on to performance, it can not be said loudly enough what a great little shotgun this is. With the short barrel and full choke, no prisoners were taken. The first victim to fall was a hare at 36 paces using Remington 2 1/2" cartridge loaded with 14 grams of #6 shot, it fell stone dead to the shot.

Before there are any complaints about shooting quarry at excessive ranges with inappropriate calibres, I should point out that I have shot a 410 regularly for 24 years and so am well aware of what the calibres capabilities are. Since that day this lovely quiet pump action has accounted for over 100 rabbits, 21 grey squirrels and countless rats. The pattern tests showed that at 20 yards over 75% of the shot still within an 18" circle.

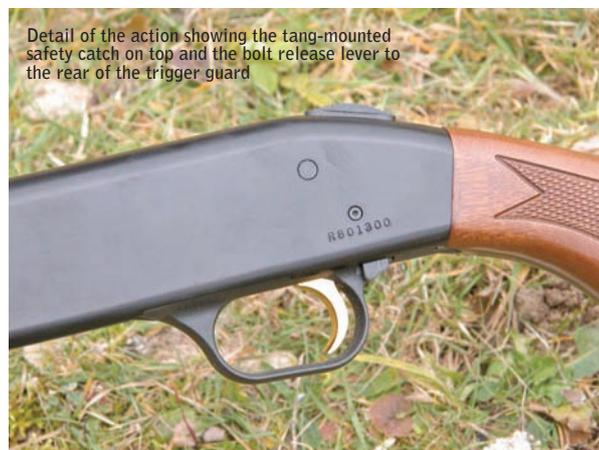
Using magnum cartridges appeared to do nothing to extend the range or killing capabilities displayed, although when shooting bolting rabbits they felt slower compared with the shorter 2 1/2" variety, this was across the board no matter what the make.

This gun would be a welcome addition to the armoury of any gamekeeper or pest controller. Or indeed any shooter who wants to get a job done or have their sport without making too much noise, an added bonus which will not hurt the users' ears or those standing nearby. The gun is good but the moderator is what makes it superb.

There is really only one downside to this little gem and that is the price of cartridges, as 410 ammo is hideously expensive in comparison to 12-bore. Let us only hope that this calibre increases in popularity and the ammunition price drops accordingly. **SS**



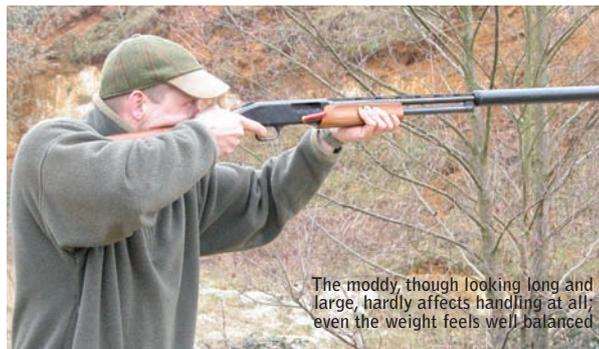
Remington's 2 1/2", #6 1/2-oz load, a decent 410 cartridge, but in general this calibre, no matter what the make, is very expensive when compared to 12-gauge ammo



Detail of the action showing the tang-mounted safety catch on top and the bolt release lever to the rear of the trigger guard



The 500 loads through the base of the action to a capacity of 2 + 1



The moddy, though looking long and large, hardly affects handling at all; even the weight feels well balanced

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Name	Mossberg Hushpower (fully moderated)
Calibre	410 (3" chamber)
Capacity	2 + 1 (Sect 2)
Action	pump
Choke	full
Price	£499
Contact	Saddlery & Gun Room, 01959 573089, hushpower@btinternet.com, www.saddleryandgunroom.com