

Of The Outdoors | Gary Howey

# New Muzzleloaders Bear Little Resemblance To Older Flintlock Rifles

BY GARY HOWEY

Hartington, Neb.

December is just around the corner and for those of us who enjoy hunting, have another opportunity to hunt deer, this time using with our muzzleloaders.



Gary  
**HOWEY**

Muzzleloader permits in Nebraska, are unlimited, and are purchased on-line or from permit vendors. The muzzle-loading season in the Cornhusker state opens shortly after the close of our rifle deer season, opening on Dec. 1 through Dec. 31.

In Nebraska, muzzleloader hunters have the opportunity to tag a buck, as Nebraska muzzleloader permits are either sex permits.

In years past, scopes weren't allowed when hunting with a muzzleloader.

This changed later when scopes up to one-power were allowed on muzzleloaders, which to some hunters was worse than using iron sights.

Later that regulation changed as all scopes now being legal on muzzleloaders.

In South Dakota, permits for muzzleloaders are also unlimited. The South Dakota muzzleloader season has three permits, the any deer, doe and the two doe permits with the season's opening the same as Nebraska, opening on Dec. 1 and continuing through Dec. 31.

These primitive weapons, muzzleloaders have come a long way since the days of Daniel Boone and Davey Crockett, with the design, and ammunition changing a lot over the years.

Muzzleloaders way back when came in several calibers, the old squirrel rifles were .36 and 40 caliber, with the larger .68 caliber muskets that were used in warfare.

Original muzzleloaders were matchlocks: wheellocks or flintlocks. Frontiersmen armed with one of these were excellent shots as they were accurate weapons for their time.

Since they loaded, one shot at a time through the muzzle, they were called muzzleloaders.



PHOTO: GARY HOWEY

Modern Muzzleloaders like the .50 caliber pictured at the top, have replaced the old style .36 and .40 caliber muzzleloaders and are much more accurate than the old flintlocks.

The loose powder, cloth patch and bullet were loaded into the weapon and fired with the help of a match or flint.

They were very primitive, but very deadly in the hands of frontiersmen, the military and the Indians.

Muzzleloaders and the equipment used in them have gone through numerous changes since their inception.

Today, the most popular caliber flintlocks and caplocks guns are the .50, and .54 along with a few .58 caliber rifles used by those who are into primitive hunting.

The modern muzzleloaders of today for to elk would use .50 caliber rifle or larger.

Those hunting deer with muzzleloaders have found the .50 and .45 calibers work very well for not only deer, but also other small game.

The first of the "modern" muzzleloader had rifled barrels but still used loose powder as a propellant with the ignition system using musket caps, which worked quite well when they didn't misfire.

The next change made to the ignition system, was

going to percussion caps to ignite the powder. This was supposed to help eliminate the misfire, but there were still problems with misfires.

This problem was solved when they started using the hotter 209-shotgun primers to ignite the powder charge, eliminating the majority of the misfires.

Another problem with the using loose powder was that it didn't burn clean and fouled the rifling in the barrel, which greatly affected the accuracy of the weapon.

In order to assure accuracy, muzzleloaders using loose powder needed to be cleaned more often than other weapons.

Hunters also had to contend the age-old problem of keeping their powder dry as it had a tendency to absorb moisture.

This problem was solved with the invention of the Pyrodex pellets. These solid pre-measured pellets were less apt to absorb moisture and also let the hunter to load more quickly.

Triple Seven pellets would be the next improvement; these pre-measure pellets burnt cleaner, giving hunters

better accuracy between cleaning.

Bullets have also improved over the years with the old round ball and patch being replaced by conical bullets, and the sabot bullets.

The conical bullets allowed the shooter to use a projectile weighing more than two times that of the round ball in the same caliber rifle, giving them greater energy levels and better knockdown power.

Then, it was the sabot bullets, a very accurate bullet encased in a heat resistant space age plastic, when fired easily compressed into the grooves of the rifle, which followed the rifling, spinning as it travels down the barrel.

When the sabot leaves the barrel, it falls away allowing the spinning bullet to travel to its target effectively.

With each improvement, the rifle became easier to load and more accurate at greater distances.

Today's modern muzzleloaders are extremely accurate to 100 yards, allowing hunters to make longer more accurate shots, giving hunters another opportu-

nity to get out and enjoy the outdoors.

With the tremendous number of deer we now have, hunters using muzzleloaders have become another important part of wildlife management.

*Gary Howey, Hartington, Nebraska, is a former tournament angler, fishing and hunting guide. He is the Producer/Host of the award winning Outdoorsmen Adventures television series, seen locally in Channels 2 and 98 at Saturday at 6:30 pm and Sunday at 7:00 am. It airs on Saturdays at 6:30 am and on the MIDCO Sports Network Thursday at 5:30 pm and Sunday at 10:00 am. The show can be seen in nine states in the upper Midwest He and Simon Fuller Co-Host the Outdoor Adventures radio program on Classic Hits 106.3, ESPN Sports Radio 1570 in Southeastern South Dakota and Northeast Nebraska. In Northwest Iowa, it airs on KCHE 92.1 FM. If you are looking for more outdoor information, check out www.outdoorsmenadventures.com.*

## Kansas Man A Veteran Of Good Hunting

EDWARDS COUNTY, Kan. (TNS) – It was one of the better shots of the day, the rooster pheasant pushing 100 feet high in the air and heading toward Oklahoma in a hurry. One shot sounded and the bird's wings folded like a closed book.

Excited shouts from the shooter's hunting partners filled the air before the bird even hit the ground. Irl Palmer didn't understand the excitement. After all, he's been hunting Kansas pheasants for about 70 years. He wishes he could have started sooner.

"When I was growing up, the main things we hunted were ducks and rabbits," said Palmer, 91, of Hutchinson. "There weren't any pheasants to hunt in those days. I didn't get back to hunt pheasants until after I got back from the war. I've sure enjoyed them, and quail, through the years."

Palmer was the guest of Mark Baldwin and others at a traditional opening-day hunt his family has helped host for about 50 years. Palmer was carted around the rough hunting fields via a utility vehicle. He, and usually three or four other hunters, waited at the ends of fields as others walked toward them. He'd done plenty of walking for birds through the decades.

"We used to go so often," he said. "For years, if three or four of us went and didn't shoot limits, we thought it was a bad day. Now I just like getting out, that's the most important thing."

During World War II, Palmer was with the Marines in the Pacific, and was slated for the invasion of Okinawa. But his ship was struck by a Japanese kamikaze flier, so he missed most of that action. Weeks later, he was one of the first three Americans to walk into Nagasaki after the U.S. dropped the second atomic bomb.

"I guess they sent us in to see if we were going to get shot at," he said. "We didn't. The



MICHAEL PEARCE/WICHITA EAGLE/TNS

Irl Palmer shot his first Kansas pheasant shortly after returning from World War II. The 91-year-old from Hutchinson shot a bird on opening day this year near Edwards County, Kan.

people were real friendly and glad to see us."

He returned to Kansas when his service was up, and the Model 12 shotgun some family members purchased and presented to him shortly after his return.

His job as a meat salesman, selling beef and other products to butchers and grocery stores across Kansas, gave him a lot of rural contacts and quite a few places to hunt for ducks, pheasant and quail. Palmer maintained some good leases, too, but they were largely for duck hunting.

"We didn't have deer and turkeys when I was really getting into hunting," he said. "Shoot, back then we didn't even have very many geese and now they're all over the place."

Living during 15 presidencies, Palmer got to hunt and fish in many places. He's quick to volunteer his favorite.

"We've got it so good here. There are a lot of good places where you can go and hunt and fish, but so often they have one really good thing," he said, waiting for the team of hunters to walk his way. "But we just have so much that is really good in Kansas. My gosh, you can go hunting or fishing for something all year and it can be great. I even had some great days ice fishing when I was younger, and lots of other kinds of fishing and hunting. These pheasant hunts are about all I do anymore."

And even that can be challenging.

As he waited for the walkers at the end of one strip, a

rooster pheasant flushed nearby, heading to Palmer's left. He stumbled a bit and didn't take a shot. As he was regaining his balance, a small squadron of five brightly-colored roosters passed over his head. He couldn't react in time to take a shot at them, either.

"I just can't get around like I used to," he said. "I guess that happens when you get to be my age."

Several other unfortunate things have happened as he's aged. He lost his wife, Betty, to Alzheimer's Disease a few years ago. His 58-year-old son, Mike, died of cancer earlier this year, so hunters spread some of his ashes during the opening-day hunt.

"He'd always come out here every year for this," Palmer said. "It meant a lot to him. We have a lot of great memories."

Others on the hunt also have great memories of their time with Palmer. Baldwin bragged of Palmer's shooting ability before the day's hunt began and of the days when his father, John, and Palmer were great friends.

Rob Christensen, from near Columbus, Ohio, spent as much time that day with Palmer as he could. Christensen is in charge of bringing and returning Palmer, his grandfather, from his retirement facility in Hutchinson.

"It's been about the only time my uncle (Mike) and my grandpa and I could get together," he said. "I've been doing the hunt for 14 years and I have a lot of great memories of the time with family and friends. Grandpa was also such a huge influence on my life. I don't know where I'd be today without out him."

Several times that morning, Palmer commented that pheasant numbers had improved noticeably from last year and the year before. Each of the patches of Conservation Reserve Program grass hunted that morning held more than a

dozen birds. Palmer was at the tip of one patch of tall grass when he made the great shot on the towering rooster. But it probably wasn't the highlight of his trip.

"Before long we'll head over there for lunch," he said, nodding towards a farmstead to the west. "The guys have been over there getting together a big lunch. There will be a lot of great food there."

An hour later he slowly walked from the table covered in food to one where he'd eat with a plate heaping with food in his hands.

"This can be as much fun as the hunting," he said.

### OUTDOORS DIGEST

#### GFP Reminds Hunters To Register For Winter Depredation Hunts

PIERRE – As winter approaches, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) reminds resident hunters of a unique opportunity that could exist later this winter.

GFP's Wildlife Damage Management Program assists landowners with wildlife depredation abatement techniques. When other methods are ineffective, GFP may utilize hunters to help reduce damage caused by wildlife.

"Winter depredation hunts are a valuable management tool that GFP uses in some situations to alleviate wildlife damage to landowners' stored-feed supplies," said wildlife damage program administrator, Keith Fisk. "Depredation hunts are largely dependent upon the severity of the winter, snowfall accumulations and the number of animals involved."

GFP has not used any depredation hunts the past few years due to mild winter conditions and lower deer and turkey populations. If extreme winter conditions cause wildlife to congregate near farmsteads and livestock feeds, depredation hunts may occur. South Dakota residents may register for potential depredation hunts for deer, antelope and turkey starting Dec. 1, 2015. Hunters can register (free of charge) at <http://gfp.sd.gov/hunting/depredation-hunts.aspx> and are encouraged to register for counties near their home or within close driving distance.

"Hunters may register for a maximum of 10 counties," said Fisk. "Depredation hunts are often time-sensitive and winter weather can sometimes make travel difficult for participating hunters. For a successful hunt, GFP needs participating hunters to be available at the hunt location almost immediately." Once registered, hunters are then put into a random drawing to determine eligibility once a depredation hunt is authorized.

Winter depredation hunts focus on assisting landowners with wildlife damage, but also can provide hunters with another opportunity after traditional hunting seasons are closed.

For more information, visit the GFP website or call 605.223.7660.

#### Father Hupp WMA Still Temporarily Closed To Protect Whooping Cranes

LINCOLN, Neb. – Father Hupp Wildlife Management Area (WMA) remains temporarily closed because of the presence of six endangered whooping cranes. The closure will be lifted once the cranes have left the area, according to the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

Father Hupp WMA is located 2½ miles west of Bruning in Thayer County.

The closure is a standard procedure for the Commission once whooping cranes are confirmed on a property owned or managed by the agency.

Whooping cranes are an endangered species and their wild population totals only about 300 individuals. Whooping cranes are protected by both the federal Endangered Species Act and the Nebraska Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Act. Penalties for killing, possessing, or harassing whooping cranes or other species protected under these laws may include fines of up to \$50,000, up to year in jail, or both.



Activities may include:

- Help with shopping and errands
- Visiting and listening
- Plan, prepare or share meals
- Help with reading, writing letters
- Share hobbies and other interests

Must be 55+ and meet an income guideline.

Please call (888)239-1210 for more info.



Partner Agency