

Testing Times

Howard questions the use of illuminated reticules - so will the Yukon 2-12x56 change his mind? And he has some fun with his ad hoc assistant

I have been asked to put a Yukon 3-12 x 56 variable scope with illuminated reticule (IR) through its paces. Up until now my opinion was an IR was just another gimmick, after all if you have a reasonable scope and lamp what point is there in having a lit reticule? But there again until now all I had done was to look through them but not actually use one, so I was keen to try this one out. I fitted it to my Tikka 223 and was soon on the range zeroing (1inch high at 100 yds).

I really wanted to know if the illumination when on had any effect on the sight picture and reticule placement? I taped a piece of reflector to a target not to simulate eye shine when the lamp hits it but to give me an aiming point. This also gave me a good indication of what to expect when actually trying it out for real on live quarry and already I could see some of the benefits.

LEFT OF...

The IR rheostat is on the left of the saddle, which makes it easier to operate than a rear-mounted dial. As I often say I am open to new ideas and any new piece of kit that helps me shoot more efficiently in the field is worth consideration. I mention this is the 11 brightness settings range from the slightest glimmer to as bright a most will require, which means you can set it up for your needs and the conditions.

What I liked was even when set to higher illumination the centre dot does not blow out or obscure the target/aim point to any great degree. I found I was instantly on the target unlike a normal scope were you can sometimes lose the crosshairs against the foliage or if the lamp-man's not steady. This got me thinking to what happened some weeks back, and if I had this scope on my rifle then the outcome may have been different! All I needed now was live quarry and that opportunity came when a fox or



After the shot I was sure I saw another in the distance with the Bipod down I can hit the ground in an instant and be ready

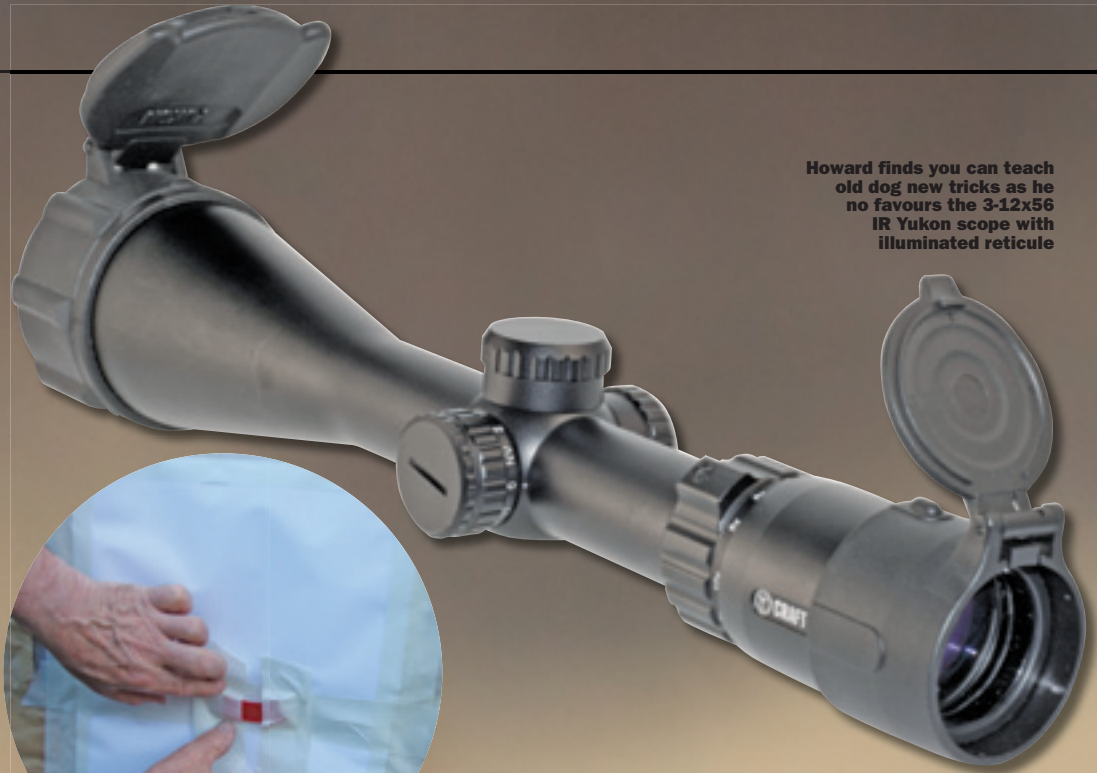
Howard finds this is the most comfortable position especially for longer range shots



Turret, rheostat and eyepiece detail



Not trying to simulate eye shine simply giving me an aiming point and an idea of what to expect



Howard finds you can teach old dog new tricks as he no favours the 3-12x56 IR Yukon scope with illuminated reticle

foxes raided a farm killing every single hen in the yard.

THE CALL

When I receive a call like this the first thing I do is arrange a meeting with whoever is giving me the permission with some urgency; next week won't do! I also make sure I introduce myself during daylight, that way I can be pointed in the right direction as I need to know about boundaries, back stops and anywhere that needs to be avoided. Plus where the live stock are, especially horses with them being flighty animals... I tend to keep away from them as the last thing I want is a hefty vet's bill.

Another thing is that I need written permission and for the land owner to make any necessary phone calls to whomever else that may have permission letting them know I will be there too. I also swap phone numbers, that way everyone knows what's going on! That all might sound pretty obvious but to a surprising number it's not!

After doing all the preparation I made arrangements for my first night out and I took the landowners grandson along too. When lamping I only ever take one other person, the main reason is safety, another is noise, also I like the lamp-man to keep within arm's length to my left, that way we can keep an eye on each other easily. I can get his attention by grabbing or tapping his shoulder and vice versa. If the lamp-man is behind I will no doubt get the glare in my scope, blinding me, spoiling what maybe the only chance of a shot. If I move my arm from left to right by keeping the routine as simple as possible it's easy to go all night with hardly a word being spoken, it's surprising how far your voice travels at night. If a fox can hear a mouse squeak or a rabbit then it's a safe bet it can hear you too.

HIGH BEAMS

I also keep the beam of the lamp high picking up eye shine on its edge, only lowering it when I give the word this way there's less chance of spooking the fox. It's a tried and tested technique and easy for a new comer to pick up with little practice. With all the do's and don'ts explained to my apprentice we got into position just on the edge of dark hoping to catch a glimpse of a fox crossing one of the lower fields. No such luck, we waited for what seemed like ages for the light to fade enough for us to start lamping, making our way up hill walking into the wind and trying to keep in the shadow of the hedges.

After an hour of lamping all we saw where some roe deer and a few rabbits. It was only four days ago there were two foxes seen playing less than 200yards from the farm buildings. Two days later all of the hens were killed, but why wait until the damage is done, this attitude has always baffled me. However, this particular landowner sees it is as 'if it don't bother him he won't bother it' which is fair enough and with another 400 acres to roam over I am not complaining, though I do get some stick when I don't produce the goods.

Though I had explained to my apprentice certain do's and don'ts there are still things you can't cover; let's say things didn't go as smoothly as they should have done! I was striding over a loose fence when in my apprentices excitement he pressed down on the barbed wire to climb over causing a strand to whip up under me! I can tell you that made my eyes water, it took another five minutes to untangle me from the wire so no point hanging around now after all the commotion.

We moved on and stood against a hedge to hide our silhouette with it being almost a full moon - not a good night for lamping. But if you can keep in cover you don't stand out and once you pick up eye shine on such a light night as this keep the light on. By switching it on you have just drawn attention to yourself if you switch the lamp off now the fox will see your shape whether you're standing against a hedge or not.

BLIND SIDED

When we did see a fox, to be fair my apprentice saw it first only for him to spook it by putting the full beam on as it was cautiously coming out of the reeds into the open. We gave it a few minutes to calm down before flicking the lamp on again this time blinding me instead of lamping left to right, if the fox weren't educated that night I was! So it was time to pack up and make arrangements for another night.

I returned a few nights later with my regular lamp-man. Entering from the far end of the land we immediately came on a fox walking across the open field. Lowering the legs on the Harris bipod I took a sitting position and give a quick sharp squeak stopping it in its tracks. Without any prompting my friend lowered the beam on to the ill fated fox the red dot of the illuminated reticle was all ready on the upper part of its body. With one stroke of the trigger it was all over!

What a difference a night makes. It was darker and I had my regular man on the lamp, not that I won't take the landowner's grandson out again as he can learn how to lamp. As for the Yukon 3- 12 x 56 IR I was so impressed I have plans to take my Schmidt & Bender off my Tikka T3 in 6mm BR and replace it with the Yukon. So it looks like I too have learned something - as you are never too old to!

For more details on the Yukon range of optics contact: Thomas Jacks Ltd, 01789 264100