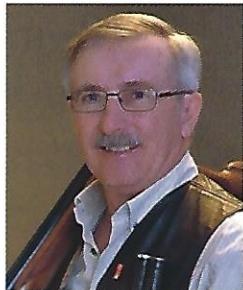




Gifts for Gun Owners

By the time you get this issue of *Alberta Outdoorsmen*, Christmas will be on the horizon. Part of what makes Christmas great is the opportunity to shower those we love with gifts. Of course, receiving gifts is always nice too, especially if the items are useful in our shooting and hunting activities. One of the most painful exercises of Christmas is opening a gift you have no use for, while pretending to be thankful and excited. I'm hoping to help you avoid that pain by listing a few items I've been using over the last year. Mark what catches your eye and leave it where your significant other can make the connection. There's nothing on this list requiring a firearm's licence.



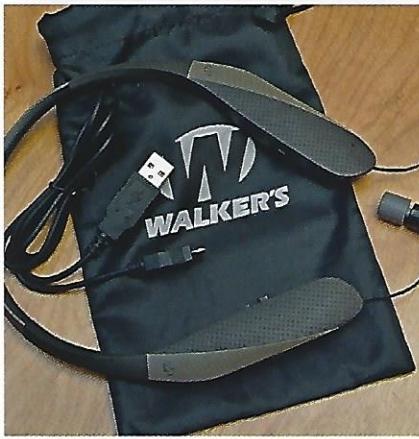
Al Voth

Quality Cleaning Rod

Too many gun owners are still using those cheap aluminum screw-together cleaning rods that come in gun cleaning kits. Christmas is a good time to upgrade to a quality one-piece rod with a big ball-bearing handle. Tipton is one company that makes rods like these, with theirs being fabricated from carbon fibre. This is an ideal product for cleaning rods because it won't damage bores, and grit won't embed in the rod. Additionally, it can be bent to extreme angles and will still return to its original straightness. They come in various sizes, so make sure you ask Santa for the right one. Numerous Alberta retailers carry them, with prices around \$55.



"Christmas is a good time to upgrade to a quality one-piece cleaning rod with a big ball-bearing handle."



"Walker's Razor XV earbud headset provides electronic hearing protection and amplification via retractable earplugs emanating from a neckband."

Hearing Protection

Shooters always need hearing protection, and new technologies are making it easier for us to defend ourselves from gunshots. A new product that's been working well for me is Walker's Razor XV earbud headset. This product uses some existing technologies but applies and integrates them in a unique way. The core of this unit is a band worn around the back of the neck. Two retractable earbuds extend from the band and fit snugly in the ears. Protection is electronic, meaning hearing is amplified, until a loud noise shuts it down. And there's even a Bluetooth link to your smartphone so you can take calls, or watch a video while sitting in your tree stand. And you don't need to buy batteries because it's all rechargeable. Cost is about \$200.

Shooting Support

Most rifle shooters have discovered the benefits of using bipods to make difficult shots. But one-legged monopods

work surprising well too. The most interesting monopod I know of is the Solid Aim Shooting Stick. I'm well over 6-feet tall and I can use it for standing shots. But it collapses down to a length of 8-inches, and can be used anywhere between those two extremes. Adjusting the length is fast and as easy as pushing a button. This extreme versatility is achieved through the use of steel straps that retract and extend on rollers fitted into the head of the unit. It's a shooting support you can drop into your pack and use for shooting prone, standing, or anything in between. You may have to do some hunting to find this one, as they are just being released commercially now. Price is about one hundred loonies.



"The Solid Aim Shooting Stick is a rifle support you can use for shooting anywhere between prone and standing."



"The best of the breed of red dot sights are used by military and law enforcement, with the Leupold LCO a good example."



"The ERA-TAC adjustable elevation scope mount can be dialed to provide up 70 MOA of elevation. Shims allow the use of different diameter scope tubes."

Adjustable Scope Mount

"Range, dial, shoot," is a well-known mantra for long-range shooters. However, the "dial" portion of that mantra is always interpreted to refer to the adjustments working *inside* the optics of a quality riflescope. What's not very well known is that there are scope mounts on the market where the "dial" is *outside* the scope and part of the mount.

All summer I've been shooting a German made scope mount that offers this adjustable elevation. Made by Recknagel, and sold under the ERA-TAC name, this mount installs on any Picatinny rail and offers an elevation adjustment range of 0 – 70 MOA, in steps of 10 MOA. If you need to shoot

at extended ranges, this is the answer to running out of scope adjustment. Note, however, that the Recknagel ERA-TAC mount is not meant to be a dialing system that replaces your scope's internal adjustments. It's a set-it, lock-it, and forget-it type of mount.

How far can you shoot with a mount like this? The math is simple; let's say there's 20 MOA in a typical base, 70 MOA in the ERA-TAC mount and 90 MOA of internal adjustment in something like a Leupold Mark 8. That's 180 MOA, and enough to get a 168-grain 308 Win. past 2000 yards, while still using a centre hold in the scope. Shoot a faster, sleeker bullet and you could go a lot further, especially if you use a hold point on the lower half of the vertical crosshair.

The ERA-TAC adjustable inclination mount is an impressive piece of engineering that oozes quality. At almost \$500, it's not cheap. Unfortunately, I don't know of any Canadian retailers carrying it, so I recommend ordering from a European retailer and avoiding the ITAR hassle in the US. Mine shipped from Germany and was here in less than a week. Work the web if you want one.

Dot Sights

Hunters tend to focus on scopes for their rifles, and ignore dot sights, consigning them to the tactical world and the realm of weekend commandos. However, if you don't have at least one rifle or shotgun in your arsenal equipped with a red dot sight, you're missing a lot of shooting fun. I have them on kid's rifles, where they work great for teaching new shooters, and on more serious guns, where the smallest of the breed have replaced the iron sights my aging eyes have difficulty focusing on. The cheapest versions are less than \$100, but I'm not sure they're worth taking home. It's best to double that number and get some quality. The best of the breed are used by military and law enforcement, with the Leupold LCO a good example. For \$1000, you get a bombproof sight that works great for close range hunting. When it comes to red dot sights, there are many choices and your budget will dictate what to ask for. Every gun shop in Alberta has a number of options.

There you have it, five options for your personal Christmas list. Hopefully, this will help avoid you having to pretend excitement at receiving socks and sweaters. Merry Christmas. ■

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Merry Little Christmas

and a

Happy New Year

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