

Transitioning From Rimfire to High-Power

By Jim Berndt

I love hunting with my son. Like all of my children, Aaron was taught basic shooting skills at an early age. I followed the conventional wisdom of teaching



Young hunters need to make the transition from small game rifles to big game rifles.

basic gun handling and safety skills first with an air rifle and then with a single-shot .22. As soon as he was old enough, my son began taking small game and decimating the local vermin population. This fall will be my son's first deer season. At the ripe old age of 13 he is now ready to head off into the deer woods (with supervision) toting a high-power rifle.

While shooting well with a .22 is a skill that many young shooters can master, making the transition to a high-power rifle can be intimidating for many young shooters. To shoot well with any rifle there is no substitute for practice – many bricks of .22 shells went into developing my son's skills with his single-shot Marlin. However few of us ever have the

time or opportunity to run that many cartridges through a single high-power rifle. Practice not only helps develop basic marksmanship but also gives familiarity and confidence with a particular rifle – how the rifle points, where the trigger breaks, loading and unloading and all of the other little things that make a rifle familiar, and shooting it instinctual.

Even with the lighter chamberings often recommended for recoil-sensitive deer hunters, like the .243 and the 7mm-08, often the recoil is substantial enough to discourage long practice sessions. So, how do you help a young hunter (or anyone for that matter) develop familiarity with a new centerfire rifle?



The Game Getter cartridge and its accessories pack neatly in their storage case – about the size of a pack of cigarettes.

Several years ago I discovered a little device which seems to be ideal for solving this problem – the Hammond Game Getter (www.gamegetter.ca).

The Game Getter is a simple device that looks like an empty brass casing with a stainless steel head. The head is drilled off-center so that a rimfire blank, the Power Loads sold by Remington for power-actuated nailers (not starter pistol blanks), placed in the hole will be struck on the rim by a center-fire firing pin. The Game Getter is packaged with a small cylinder swage designed to size



The Game Getter is readied by placing a swaged buckshot pellet in the case mouth and a blank cartridge in the base. The offset hole in the base of the Game Getter positions the rimfire blank properly for the center-fire firing pin.

appropriate-caliber buckshot to the precise dimensions for the caliber being used. In use, a .22 rimfire blank (Power Load) is placed in the cartridge head and a sized buckshot pellet is pressed into the

cartridge mouth; the assembled “cartridge” is then chambered and fired like a normal rifle cartridge. After firing, the Game Getter is removed from the chamber and the fired blank is removed (I found a pocket knife useful here).

At the range, the Game Getter allows for long practice sessions with literally no recoil fatigue. All of the shooter’s attention is focused on sight picture and trigger control. Also, if you are not a reloader, the Game Getter allows for very inexpensive practice with your deer rifle without shooting up increasingly expensive factory ammunition. I found the accuracy of the Game Getter to be fine, around an inch at the 100 foot distance of our targets.



Taking recoil and muzzle-blast out of shooting allows the young shooter to concentrate on sight picture and trigger control.

The real excitement for my son came when we took the 7mm-08 with the Game Getter out into the woods in search of squirrels. As good a range practice is, there is just no substitute for real hunting practice. As my son hunted with the centerfire rifle he became increasingly confident in his ability to hit live targets.

The Game Getter proved to be plenty powerful for cleanly taking bushy tails at tree-top height. With the rifle sighted in at 100 feet, the trajectory of the .280 pellet was flat enough to insure regular hits at squirrel hunting range. The



results of our training hunt not only produced enough squirrels for several meals, but also substantially increased my son's confidence with the rifle he will take into the deer woods this fall.

Using a center-fire rifle for small game hunting provides valuable practice for the deer season.