



Hey! Good Lookin'

Mark Camoccio peers through the Hawke Vantage LRF400 laser rangefinder to see what's what

I don't deny that I have been addicted to competition shooting for many years, but I am also an occasional hunter – normally when summer takes off and the pleasure of just being outdoors in our beautiful countryside, on a balmy hot evening, is reward in itself. Witnessing the natural world up close can be absorbing and

ABOVE: Don't take on live quarry without one!

fascinating, but if we are to take on live quarry, then the onus is on us all only to attempt shots when we can almost guarantee a clean kill.

GAINING AN EDGE

Technology has moved on in leaps and bounds over the last few decades, and the modern-day

airgun hunter now has a multitude of gadgets, gizmos, and high-tech sighting systems with which to play. For success in a hunting scenario, it's all about mastering the airgun's trajectory in order to place the pellet just where we want to, and that's where laser rangefinders come in – arguably the biggest game-changer



RIGHT: Ergonomic controls



FAR RIGHT: Just unscrew this cap to get to the battery



to hit the market in recent years.

At this juncture, I can't help but repeat the comments that I've heard along the way, when speaking to the 'odd' shooter who considers rangefinders to be unsporting. Their curious grumble is that such hardware gives us an unfair advantage against our quarry – no, really! Anyone favouring a leaning, more towards Russian roulette, as far as clean kills go, is a very odd shooter indeed, in my book, since maximising our efficiency in the field, has to be top priority. Our quarry deserves nothing less!

needs to be loaded into its little compartment under the screw cap. Thereafter, everything is controlled by the two buttons on the top. Press the nearest one to power on the device, and the central LCD display will show in black. Now press the front Mode button and hold this down for a few seconds, and the unit of measurement can then be toggled between 'Y' yard or 'M' metre. Single click the Mode button, and switch between: Distance, Rain, Hunt, Horizontal Distance, and Angle.

Distance will be the most commonly used, and here, just point

"Rain mode measures the straight-line distance to a target and ignores any interference if it's raining"

Hawke produce several models, with varying features, and whilst the Vantage LRF400, on test here, carries their lowest specification, in my view, it has everything needed for airgun use. The LRF400 is wonderfully compact at just 3.75 inches long, and a featherweight 6oz in weight! Rangefinding capabilities up to 400 yards is plenty, and at £179, it's competitively priced, too. So what do we get, along with the two-year warranty? Vantage laser rangefinders are fitted with an LCD display, rather than the OLED display on the Endurance models, but I reckon LCD is preferable, with none of the glare associated with the orange-lit display of OLED.

onto a target and press the power/read button. A returned figure will now show in the display.

Rain mode measures the straight-line distance to a target and ignores any interference if it's raining. In this mode, the manufacturer recommends that the target be more than 33 yards away.

Hunt mode supposedly ignores interference from long grass, or other vegetation between the



LEFT: Adjust basic focus with the rear dioptre

FUNCTIONALITY

Functionality is similar, with multi-coated optics and a prism system incorporated. Not all LRFs have magnification, so the fact that we have 6x to play with here, is another bonus. Basic focus can be set for the individual, and this should be the first step, achieved by twisting the rear adjustable rubber-rimmed dioptre. One CR2 Lithium 3v battery powers the unit, and this just



RIGHT: Controls are easy to master



ABOVE LEFT: Hawke's LRF400 is neat and efficient



ABOVE RIGHT: Laser rangefinders have become increasingly popular

shooter and the target.

Horizontal Distance mode – press the power/read button on an elevated target sitting up at an angle, and you will then be returned the horizontal distance in the display. Effectively, the shooter can then allow for the trajectory of an elevated target.

Angle mode shows the angle in degrees, at which a target is sitting, All handy information; useful to a greater or lesser degree.

ON TEST

Standard 'Distance' mode on test, proved very accurate, within a yard when I stuck to normal airgun distances – in other words, within a yard either way, out to 60 yards. Longer, sample targets were picked over a few hundred yards, and again came in consistently, within a couple of yards. Certain small targets can be tricky to read, and here, it can pay dividends to take a reading from a larger bush or tree nearby. Varying/fading light can also affect performance, but overall, the LRF400 is a very competent device. It's a good rule with any rangefinding tool to take

BELOW LEFT: A wrist strap makes sense

BELOW RIGHT: Hawke's LRF400 is a really neat tool

an average of a few readings, too.

I love the feel in the hand of this LRF, and the slender soft-touch ergonomics and easy two-button controls couldn't be more user-friendly. The display automatically turns off after 15 seconds which is ideal to save battery life, whilst low battery power will also be indicated by a symbol in the display.

USES

Of course, our primary interest is shooting, but this laser rangefinder is also ideal for use in golf, archery, and in the construction industry for site surveys, for example, where dimensions and distance calculations are all part of the process. Given the modest asking price, certainly compared to several rivals, it makes a logical addition to any kit box. As mentioned, other models exist in the Hawke line-up, with greater distance specified, yet for airgun shooting –even in the FAC bracket – 400 yards nicely covers it.

NEAT INVESTMENT

At the end of the day, it comes down to the basics; why not use

technology to our advantage, when we have such hardware readily available? Surely, it pays to gain an edge where possible in the field, and this latest Vantage LRF400 from Hawke Optics, allows us to do just that. It's a cracking piece of kit, and the perfect pocket companion to tighten the odds strongly in your favour. ■

SPECIFICATION

Model: Vantage LRF400
Manufacturer: Hawke Optics
Length: 3.75"
Weight: 6oz
Range: 437yds/400m
Range Accuracy: +/-2yds on test
Magnification: 6x
Objective Diameter: 21mm (.8")
Optics: Fully multi-coated, anti-reflective
Display: LCD
Power Source: CR2 Lithium, 3v battery
Field of View: 420ft @1000yds
Eye Relief: .7"
Contact: Hawke Optics www.hawkeoptics.com

RRP: £179

