

SHOOTING SPORTS MAGAZINE

Ian Davies tests the Mossberg 500 pump Hushpower

Ridiculously long but surprisingly effective... Ian Davies tests The Saddlery & Gunroom's Mossberg 500 pump-action shotgun, fitted with their own Hushpower moderator system.

Nowadays, just about any firearm can be fitted with an effective moderation system to reduce noise and firing signature. In the beginning it was just 22Rimfires, now it seems to be everything from 17 Remington right up to the big full bore Centrefires. Certainly anything going supersonic will show less reduction, but that's not to say the end result isn't significantly different, or for that matter effective...

And in terms of effectiveness there are a number of advantages; a reduction in hearing damage to the user, the quarry is spooked less, which in the case of pest controllers looking for high body counts is useful, and also less environmental disturbance - and that includes annoying people who live near to where you are shooting, especially at night.

All this holds true for firearms and to a degree airguns too, but one area that has always been considered un-silenceable is shotguns. Why, I'm not really sure, but perhaps it's that big, deep boom as they fire that gives this impression. They may offer a much lower velocity than a fullbore rifle, but that rolling signature can be heard for miles.

Why and How?

But why would you want to moderate a shotgun and more importantly, how? The first is easy, as the smoothbore is a very effective close range pest control tool and making it quieter will only improve its ability. The second is easy too, though not without its penalties, as you just fit a big moderator I do mean big. Though the military over the years have dabbled with silenced shotguns and even special ammunition, the civilian market has been less interested. The one notable exception in the UK is the Saddlery & Gunroom in Kent: they market a range of moderated shotguns under the Hushpower banner and reckon that they can fit some form of silencer to any smoothbore type. You may recall that some years ago Bruce Potts looked at one of their single-shot designs in these pages, which showed a full length can. This time around I got the chance to play with a somewhat different option — a Mossberg Model 500 pump-action in 12-gauge.

Unlike a single barrel, break-action gun, whose design allows the barrel to be almost completely covered by the can, a pump with its fixed magazine tube, means that the mody has to start at the end of the barrel nut. This makes for a long gun, as can clearly be seen by the pictures. The actual suppression unit is 2" in diameter and 22" long, making for an overall gun length of 57" when compared to a standard Model 500 with a 28" tube at 48".

The Hushpower unit on the Mossberg is permanently attached and consists of a series of baffles and expansion chambers; designed to slaw down and cool the gases generated by firing. The barrel is also ported so that these gases can be tapped off at the start of the moderator assembly for maxi effect. So as we can see this axis= differs from that of say a screw fit BR Tuote T4 AR Reflex, as you might fit to a 223 foxing rifle.

What you Get

Though considerably longer, the aluminium can doesn't make for a totally nose-heavy design. I would say that weight is the lesser consideration when compared to the length. What you get in the Hushpower package for the money is very good. The gun comes with the moderated barrel and also a standard 28" tube with recoil porting and a screw-in choke. Both offer 3" chambers. No extra chokes or a fitting key are supplied, but they are available if you should want them. So in effect you are getting two guns for £499, which is good as you then have the choice of a moderated tube for special duties and a standard barrel, so you have a useful working or field gun for everyday smoothbore needs.

The Model 500 is the standard wood stocked version with all the usual Mossberg pump-action features, which have made it one of the most practical slide actions every designed. The shell lifter is skeletonised and locks to the underside of the bolt when the action is shut; this makes for easy loading. And it's also good if you get a feed jam as there's plenty of access to the magazine tube.

As ever, the safety catch is located at the top of the tang on the rear of the receiver hump. I have always found this an excellent position, as it's both easy to operate and totally ambidextrous. The Model 500 is a Section 2 shotgun, as the mag has been crimped to only allow two rounds up the tube. Changing from the moderated to standard barrel is also easy; open the action so the bolt is unlocked and undo the captive nut at the end of the barrel lug and pull the barrel assembly off. Then slide in the new unit and tighten the nut.

Quiet Time

Never having shot a moderated 12-gauge before I was naturally a little dubious of the effectiveness of the Hushpower system. For the test I picked up some sub-sonic cartridges, as Saddlery & Gun Room recommend that they will give better performance in terms of noise reduction. Loaded by Eley for them they are a 32-gram #6 shot load in a 2 ½" low brass case. I also dug out some standard velocity #6 loads as a comparison.

As I said, the most noticeable aspect of this Hushpower gun is the handling, as that big can does take some getting used to - and it's a bit cumbersome from inside a vehicle. As luck would have it I had some rabbits to clear out near a housing estate, so quietness and safety were paramount. This meant no 22 Long Rifle due to the possibility of ricochets bouncing were they should not...

But first I had to test the effectiveness of the system and the sub-sonic ammo. The firing signature is the weirdest thing I have ever heard, as it makes a sort of dull snick/crack noise as it goes off. Suffice to say it sounds nothing like a shotgun, or for that matter a moderated rifle either. You do get a noise reflection from any vertical objects though, which will tend to roll back after firing. This can be accounted for by the direction you aim in, but the general effect is highly practical in terms of sound produced.

Sound level data gathered and supplied by Saddlery & Gun Room clearly shows the difference between a standard un-moderated

12-gauge and a Hushpower using subsonics:

The effective range doesn't seem to be particularly affected by the sub-sonic load and I was able to roll bunnies over out to 30-35 yards without any problems. I wouldn't say that it spooked the rabbits any less as I cut into them, but I was not told of any noise complaints by the residents of the houses near the field I was working in.

Out of interest I tried the Hushpower with the standard #6 loads. These proved nosier, though the effect was still most impressive in comparison to an un-moderated gun. The Hushpower Mossberg 500 pump certainly works well with sub-sonic ammo and is no slouch with standard stuff either. It is, however, highly specialised, though the extra barrel does make it an attractive buy if you have the need.

Quotes

"The Model 500 is one of the most practical pumps, available and shows good features like its skeletonised shell lifter and tang-mounted safety catch"

"The firing signature is the weirdest thing I have ever heard - it makes a dull snick crack as it goes off"

"All this holds true for firearms and to a degree airguns too, but one area that has always been considered un-silenceable shotguns"



Technical Specifications

Name: Mossberg Hushpower Pump-action shotgun

Caliber: 12 gauge

Capacity: 2 + 1

Moderated barrel Standard 28" barrel

Price: **£499**

