



Too Pretty TO HUNT

Fabarm's L4S Deluxe Hunter

by Al Voth

Alberta's shotgunners have never had it so good in regard to shotgun options. Of course, we have all the big brands which start with "B" available, and there are plenty of economical options in the marketplace originating from Turkey. However, there's always room for another option, and a contender for that space is Fabarm of Italy.

With well over a century of gun making experience behind them and located in the "gun valley" of Bresica, Italy, Fabarm has only been sporadically available in Canada. However, with a new distributor intent on making the brand widely available, that seems to be changing. With no previous personal experience with Fabarm products, I jumped at the chance to see what its current products look like, and that's how a Fabarm L4S Deluxe Hunter found its way to my door.

Fit and Finish

This is a gas operated, semi-automatic shotgun that occupies the top end of Fabarm's semi-auto hunting line. The Deluxe designation in its model name is certainly fitting as this is a beautiful shotgun. The wood is wonderful and compliments the dark blueing of the barrel and the sliver-coloured finish of the receiver. There's some tasteful engraving on the receiver, with a gold duck on the right side and a gold pheasant on the left indicating its intended use as a hunting gun. Fit and finish leaves nothing to be desired.

However, if you'd hesitate to take a



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gun this pretty into the field, there's a plainer version available called the Black Hunter. It lacks the fancy wood, engraving, and gold inlays, but I understand it has the same internals. There's also an in-between version, called the Grey Hunter, which splits the difference between the two. Price, of course, corresponds to the degree of embellishment with prices starting at about \$1500 CAD and going up from there.

Shooting

With a weight just over six pounds the Deluxe Hunter is light enough for long carries, not relying on mass, but on the gas-operated mechanism to reduce felt recoil. There's also a rubber butt pad, but it's thin enough that I hesitate to call it a recoil pad. Adding a thick pad might be worth considering if a steady diet of magnum loads was in the gun's future. Certainly, target loads were more fun to shoot than the Federal three-inch

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“There’s some tasteful engraving on the receiver, with a gold duck on the right side and a gold pheasant on the left side.”

magnum ammo I gave it to digest, which is true with any shotgun.

Fabarm says the gun will handle everything from target loads to the heaviest goose loads without adjustment. It does this via an elastomer sleeve that fits around the magazine tube and connects to the action bars. As combustion gases are bled from the barrel, they are redirected to this sleeve-like piston. The pressure and volume of the gases determines how much the elastomer piston is compressed and therefore the amount of friction exerted against the side walls of the tube. Light loads exert little pressure so there is little friction as the mechanism cycles. Heavy loads compress the sleeve/piston enough to create more friction and slow the cycle.

The game loads I fed the gun all functioned perfectly, but I did encounter failures to eject with Federal 1 1/8-oz. target loads chronographed at 1179

fps. As the gun warmed up, I noted reliability improved, leading me to suspect a lack of cleaning and lubrication. Disassembly showed the gun had been previously fired, so I did some cleaning. On the next outing it lived up to the factory claim and digested target loads perfectly. The lesson seems to be that to function with light loads the piston mechanism must be kept clean.

The disassembly I did revealed another interesting feature, the attachment of the forend. Unscrewing the typical forend knob allowed removal of the wood, as expected. But the barrel assembly remains locked in place until a secondary knob is unscrewed. This means that pretty forend doesn’t take any of the stresses associated with holding the barrel and the gas mechanism in place. That should reduce the potential for cracked forends.

Barrels and Chokes

Fabarm makes a big deal about their chokes and barrels, holding several patents to justify their excitement. Starting at the chamber, their system, called the Tribore HP, features a long forcing cone, after which we see an over-bored section measuring about 0.736-inches in diameter (the standard bore diameter for a 12 Gauge is 0.729-inches). After this section, the bore tapers back down to a diameter of 0.724-inches. Like a stream of water which increases in velocity as the diameter of the nozzle is reduced, this bore reduction is claimed to increase velocity. Yes, there’s always a velocity loss when a barrel is over-bored.

At this point the shot charge is fed into the choke tube, a proprietary Fabarm design, which on this field gun is flush with the muzzle and 3.227-inches long. The Full Choke tube, for example, measures 0.738-inch in internal diameter at the rear, then there’s a long, tapered constriction to 0.688-inch close to the muzzle, at which point it expands again rapidly to 0.705-inch at the muzzle. According to Fabarm, all these dimensional gymnastics result in tighter patterns and increased velocity. They back this up by claiming the Full Choke tube can be safely and effectively used with steel shot. So, I tried it. There were no ill effects detected from my limited shooting and patterns were indeed tight. I also compared velocities produced by the Fabarm to that of another gas-operated semi-auto with the same barrel length. Using Federal target ammo again, the velocity average of five shots was 46 fps faster in the Fabarm than the other gun. When I switched to Federal 3-inch with 1-1/4 oz of #2 steel, the two guns averaged within two-fps of each other, so no significant gain for the Fabarm there.

Controls

Fabarm has seen fit to place the bolt-release button on the left side of the receiver, instead of the right side where it’s usually found. This is the first semi-auto I’ve shot where this is the case and I do prefer it on the left. As a right-hand shooter, I find it more convenient to activate here. Also on the left side, near the bottom of the receiver is a magazine cutoff button. Push this button to move a shell from the magazine tube onto the lifter, without firing the gun. Then cycle the bolt to load the chamber. It’s also

used to lock the bolt in the open position if the gun is cocked and the bolt is closed, as well as to unload the magazine without cycling rounds in and out of the chamber.

The trigger on my sample proved to be a decent shotgun trigger, breaking uniformly at about five pounds, a value I suspect most shooters will find acceptable. As is common these days, the gun ships with a shim kit which allows owners to adjust comb height, as well as cast. I shot it the way it arrived, with a neutral shim in place and it fit me just fine. Likewise for my friend Pete, who brought another perspective to the gun’s examination.

Other features of note include a red fibre optic front bead, with no mid-bead on the ventilated rib. Pushing out two pins allows removal of the trigger group for easy maintenance. A typical cross-bolt safety is located on the trigger group, immediately behind the trigger. Magazine capacity is four, and with the supplied limiter it’s reduced to the usual two. The barrel’s interior is chrome plated as is the assembly which acts as the action bars and bolt carrier. The five choke tubes



“The L4S disassembles easily, with many chrome plated parts making cleanup quick.”

supplied with the gun are plated as well, making them easy to clean.

Fabarm products are new to me and so far I’m impressed with their build

quality, appearance, and operation. Having a quality shotgun option that’s 100% made in Italy promises to be a good thing for Canadian shooters. ■

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