

## Bushmaster .308 Rifle



After Bushmaster set out to design a .308-Win. AR-type rifle, the company's engineers decided there was room for a new approach. One key area was the magazine. Other rifles of this type use either proprietary magazines or modified M14 magazines. So when designing a new .308 Win. rifle, it was only logical to choose a highquality, inexpensive and plentiful magazine. The FAL magazine met all three criteria. High-capacity .308 magazines for the ubiquitous Fusil Automatique Leger or FAL are reasonably priced and widely available.

With its .308, Bushmaster re-engineered the AR—originally designed for its magazine to be directly inserted into the magazine well—and modified it to use an FAL magazine. The FAL design is inserted front first to engage a magazine well recess and then rotated back to lock into place. Bushmaster's engineers not only integrated the two components, but did so without modifying the FAL magazines.

In the process, it arguably improved the controls over those of traditional AR-type rifles.

The magazine controls are ingenious, both in how they have been adapted to the FAL magazine and in how their ergonomics offer the shooter improved control. The magazine catch is a spring-loaded latch that engages the locking lug on the FAL magazine's upper rear face. The release is fully ambidextrous. When the release is pressed from either side, a lever retracts the latch and the magazine drops free.

Like the magazine catch, the bolt release is a departure. It consists of a one-piece bar that extends across the bottom of the rifle just forward of the trigger guard behind the magazine well. Pressing down on either side releases the bolt. The optional ambidextrous safety transforms the Bushmaster .308 into the only fully ambidextrous AR-type rifle available. Bushmaster also eliminated the

sometimes inconvenient charging handle latch, replacing it with a hidden spring-loaded detent in the center of the charging handle that engages a recess in the upper receiver.

The upper and lower receivers are made of forged 7075-T6 aluminum. About half of the .308's components interchange with those of .223-Rem. caliber rifles, but none are stressed, so reliability is unaffected. Two versions of the Bushmaster .308 are available—an A2 type with fixed carry handle and sights and an A3 variant with a flat top upper receiver and a three-rail gas block. Barrels are rifled with four lands and grooves in a 1:10" right-hand twist.

The Bushmaster rifle came with an optional Ace Ltd. "ARFX" skeleton stock. This stock replaces the "A2" type fiberglass stock with one of hard anodized aluminum that is both lighter and stronger than the original. The stock has a closed-cell foam cover over the buffer tube. This provides a much improved cheek weld, and dampens vibration and noise. The stock comes with a 1/2" thick recoil pad that has a "tacky" feel that helps hold the stock in position.

Bushmaster's "A3" .308 doesn't come with iron sights installed, so we chose an EoTech Holographic Weapon Sight (HWS) as our primary sight. This sight has recently been adopted by the U.S. Army and is probably the fastest optical sight available. The 65 m.o.a. circle and 1 m.o.a. dot reticle draw the eye to the target, enabling almost instant engagement.

Shooting the Bushmaster .308 is little different from firing other AR-type .308 rifles, except that the Bushmaster's fire controls are reconfigured. All necessary tasks in shooting the rifle can be accomplished without taking one's hand from the pistol grip. The trigger was a typical AR single-stage unit with some gritty creep and a 6-lb. break.

We fired the rifle for accuracy with Black Hills 175-gr. Match, PMC 168-gr. Match and Remington 168-gr. Match ammunition at 100 yds. from sandbags. Our sample rifle was 100 percent reliable and quite accurate. The innovative ergonomics and the availability of inexpensive, quality FAL magazines make the new Bushmaster an attractive choice for those looking for a semi-automatic rifle chambered in .308 Win.



In addition to the 16 1/4" model tested, 20"-barreled rifles (above) also are available. The bolt release is a one-piece bar located just forward of the trigger guard (arrow, l.).

Lock-up is by the proven Purdey double-underlug method—with a slight twist. Beretta angled the lugs slightly to keep the gun tight even as surfaces wear. The lugs are manufactured by electric discharge machining (EDM), and the barrels are fused to the monobloc with a laser—making this classically styled side-by-side utterly modern in its manufacture. The surfaces of the breechface and receiver under the barrels are jeweled.

The barrels are cold hammer forged, and the 3" chambers are chrome-lined. Beretta's interchangeable Optimachokes came with our sample, and the 2 3/4"-long tubes feature an elongated cone for the choke constriction. The exterior bluing of the barrels is smooth and even.

The stock is of European walnut with a semi-gloss finish, and our sample exhibited nice figure on both sides. The stock's wrist and fore-end are hand-



checkered in a 20-line-per-inch, bordered point pattern with only a few flattened points and no overruns. Wood-to-metal fit was excellent around the trigger guard, but left intentionally proud at the receiver and fore-end.

The butt is topped by a blue Beretta Gel-Tek recoil pad, which has a silicon center to better distribute recoil. The outside surface is smooth, and a slight radius at its top makes the pad unlikely to hang up on the shooter's clothing as the gun is mounted. Two lugs projecting from the rear of the buttstock engage recesses in the pad's interior. When the wire retainer at its bottom is pulled down, the pad slips off easily—allowing replacement with a pad of a different size or color.

An Anson push rod serves as a retainer for the fore-end. Depressing the grooved button at its front moves the retaining iron out of engagement with the fore-end hanger. A small, white metal diamond-shaped insert is visible on the fore-end's underside within the checkering and serves as a retaining nut for the fore-end iron. Interestingly, a small selector mounted in the fore-end iron's left allows the shooter to choose between selective automatic ejection or extractors only.

As befits a gun with a pistol grip stock, the Silver Hawk has a single, selective trigger, which has an inertial block that sets the second barrel to fire. The steel trigger blade is left in the white, and it broke at 4 lbs., 12 ozs. for the right barrel, and 5 lbs., 12 ozs. for the left. Barrel selection is made via a button mounted on the tang safety. Pushing it to the left reveals a single red dot, and the right barrel fires first. Pushing it to the right selects the left barrel, and two red dots are revealed. Operating the selector moves the inertial block into engagement with the selected sear, even if the gun is already cocked.

Pressing the automatic safety forward disengages it. Moving the top tang lever to the right withdraws

the two locking bolts to the rear, allowing the gun to be opened.

The Silver Hawk was function-fired at Shady Grove Hunt Preserve and Sporting Clays in Remington, Va., with 2 3/4" Federal and Winchester loads and patterned at 40 yds. The results are shown in the accompanying table. The 471 proved surprisingly lively for a gun with this style of stock and fore-end. Its 28" barrels aided a smooth swing and follow through. Once it was moving with the bird, the 471 was steady and smooth.

While straight stocks and splinter fore-ends are preferred by many upland hunters, others, including dove hunters and waterfowlers, like the reassuring weight and feel of a beavertail fore-end a pistol-grip stock. Those looking for an American-style stock in a modern, quality side-by-side with enough ornamentation to impress their friends in the field or blind (without being ostentatious) need look no further than the 471 Silver Hawk.

SHOOTING RESULTS (100 YDS.)					
.308 Win. Cartridge	Vel. @ 15'	Energy (ft.-lbs.)	Group Size In Inches		
	(f.p.s.)	(ft.-lbs.)	Smallest	Largest	Average
Black Hills Match 175-gr HP	2398 Avg. 19 Sd	2,234	1.36	1.91	1.65
PMC No. 308SMB 168-gr HPBT Match	2346 Avg. 21 Sd	2,052	1.11	1.78	1.55
Remington R308W7 168-gr HPBT Match	2347 Avg. 24 Sd	2,042	1.21	1.78	1.50
Measured average velocity for 10 rounds from a 16 1/2" barrel. Range temperature: 72° F. Humidity: 71%. Accuracy for five consecutive, five-shot groups at 100 yds. from a sandbag. Data collected using an Oehler Model 35 with 15 minutes cooling off between groups. Abbreviations: HP (hollow point), HPBT (hollow-point boattail), Sd (standard deviation).					



### **Bushmaster .308 Specifications:**

Bushmaster

P.O. Box 1479; Windham, ME 04062;

(800) 883-6229; [www.bushmaster.com](http://www.bushmaster.com)

Caliber: 308 Win. (7.62 mm NATO)

Action Type: gas-operated, semi-automatic,  
center-fire rifle

Receiver: 7075 T6 aluminum, hard anodized black

Barrel: 16 1/4"

Rifling: four lands and grooves; 1:10" RH twist

Magazine: detachable box (FAL) 5-, 10- or 20-  
round

Sights: none supplied (AR "A2" type available)

Trigger Pull: single-stage, non-adjustable, 6 lbs.

Stock: straight line, length of pull 14"; drop at heel,  
0", drop at comb, 0"

Overall Length: 38 1/2"

Weight: 9 lbs., 8 ozs. as tested, including sight,  
sling and magazine

Accessories: one 20-round FAL magazine

Suggested Retail Price: \$1,825