



Sticktacular!

Have Wicked Lights engineered the perfect rifle rest system? **Mike Powell** reckons they might have done just that as he tests the Rekon sticks on a foxing mission

A rifle rest of one sort or another is an essential item, even for a shooter like me who pursues the fox in the main and doesn't shoot on the open hill. Over time I have tried pretty much all of the different types of rest that have been available.

The most basic rest is the monopod. I know many stalkers use these, but personally I could never get on with the single stick, so I moved on to a bipod – better but not brilliant for static shooting. I then got a quad pod, which

gave an extremely solid platform to shoot from, but was, for my type of shooting, not quick enough to re-position for a change of direction. Finally, I invested in a set of Primos Trigger Sticks, which are lightweight, quickly deployed on rough ground when you're on the move, and in general very useful. That said, I did find that a couple of sets seized up, and perhaps for static use they were a little on the light side. They also had a cradle that could be attached to hold a rifle, which certainly could come in handy, though in

my case a couple of the rifles I used at the time were pretty heavy, and I didn't want to risk the cradle with them.

Having searched long and hard for a really useful set of sticks, I knew exactly what I was after, so when the ever-helpful Paul at Scott Country told me he had some new sticks in from the American firm Wicked Lights and asked me if I'd like to try them, I jumped at the chance. When they arrived, I was immediately impressed by the small size of the parcel; opening it revealed a compact, sturdy setup made from carbon fibre. Setting the sticks up took no time at all, and it was clear from the word go that these were the sort of thing I had been looking for.

With the Rekon sticks, as they are known, you have a choice of two types of head fittings: Picatinny or hog/pig saddle. Apart from long distance and target shooters, I have little doubt that it will be the saddle that most will choose. There are two of these to choose from; the hog saddle is the better quality of

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the two, extremely strong and lined with rubber. The rifle sits in the saddle and a thumbscrew tightens the clamp on the rifle, holding it securely – ideal! The pig saddle is the standard fitting and works just as well, but is heavier and made from steel rather than aluminium.

IN THE FIELD

Before finishing off the description of the Rekon, I will recount a couple of outings we had recently: one before the Rekons had arrived, and one after.

We had recently been given access to some new ground that I knew held a lot of foxes. Bordered by several acres of woodland that hadn't been shot over for at least 20 years, it was a haven for wildlife, predominately vermin. It was many years since I had last been on the land, so Callum and I set off for a recce one sunny evening.

As soon as we entered the first field, we spotted a roebuck couched down in a rough grass field. Shortly after, a doe wandered into the neighbouring corn field and started browsing. There was a large patch of brambles at one side of the steep field we were in that gave a good field of view in all directions, so I set up the Trigger Sticks against it, and after a short wait I started calling. Within moments a well-grown cub came hurtling down the field, coming to a halt a few yards from us – too close for a shot – then disappeared into the brambles.

About five minutes later a fox appeared at the top of the field, but no shot was possible for safety reasons. A few more calls later, another cub came down the field behind us, but because of the position we were in, I couldn't get on to it, and it slipped away into the hedge. One of the problems we have here is that some of the land is very steep, so you need a rest that can be deployed for both uphill and downhill shots.

Half an hour later, an adult was spotted at the bottom of the field. Once more, it needed a resetting of the sticks to get on to it, by which time that one had disappeared too. Suddenly, one of the cubs we had seen earlier was seen making its way towards the adjoining wood, and that one was dropped by the .17 Hornet at 100 yards.



The sticks undergo a little fine-tuning before their first 'real' use

“ Some of the land is very steep, so you need a rest that can be deployed for both uphill and downhill shots ”

As most fox movement seemed to be coming from the top of the field in front of us, I set up the Trigger Sticks to cover that direction. But sod's law intervened, and the next fox appeared to our right. By the time the sticks had been repositioned it had gone. Finally, I got an adult at around 100 yards, so it was not a wasted evening, but not as good as it could have been.

The next day, the Rekon sticks arrived from Scott Country, and after a quick

play with them I could see the potential they offered, so another outing was arranged for the following night. Knowing there were a lot of foxes on the new

ground, we decided to return, and for test purposes we set up in the same position we had occupied previously.

The moment we had set the Rekon sticks up and mounted the rifle (this time Callum's Howa 1500), which took a couple of minutes, we realised what a difference they made. With the cradle supported by the ball joint, we had the ability to cover every part of the area we could see. Also, with the longer central pillar, high uphill

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Supporting the rifle while keeping hands free for shooting – or photography!



The ball joint system is well thought out



The lightweight Hog saddle found a lot of favour during Mike's test



Carbon fibre legs provide robust yet flexible support

and steep downhill shots would be no problem. Another advantage the Rekon offered was to have the rifle mounted and ready for action at all times while leaving both hands free for using the binoculars, thermal spotter and rangefinder. The central pillar also has a hook at the base, which is ideal for hanging binos or a rangefinder on.

We really didn't have any great expectations of getting much, as it hadn't been long since our previous visit. Eventually, after an hour or so, much of which had passed pleasantly enough watching a couple of roe does peacefully browsing their way up the valley, a fox was spotted making its way below us at the very bottom of the valley. The run it was following would take it directly below us. Callum got behind the rifle, and within seconds the Rekon had lined up at a pretty acute angle on a spot where the fox's line of approach should bring it for a safe shot. I mentioned to Callum not to forget to make allowance for the steep shot angle, and we waited.

Sure enough, after a few minutes the fox headed exactly where we hoped it would: in the direction of the farmyard. Warning Callum that I would stop it, I gave a shout, and as is usually the case when a fox has no idea there is a human about, it stopped. The .243 sent a 58gn bullet down the hill, and the fox dropped.

THE VERDICT

I have to say the Rekon sticks had passed all tests with flying colours. They are not cheap, but you do get what you pay for. For the shooter who more often than not sets up in a static position and waits for fox or deer, they are ideal.

There are one or two more things to say about the sticks themselves. Firstly, even though the legs have a considerably heavier profile than any others I have used, giving them excellent stability, being made of carbon fibre they are light. The rubber-coated compression collars used to adjust leg height give a good grip and work perfectly, locking the legs completely securely.

The sticks come supplied with two central columns: a short one that would be used if you need the sticks in their prone position or on flat land, and a longer



one that is ideal for giving extra height when using them on steep inclines. I opted for the latter.

One of the biggest assets these sticks offer is the ability to move the rifle to almost any angle or direction smoothly and easily. The knurled control knob that operates the clamp system surrounding the ball joint can be infinitely adjusted so the rifle can be moved easily, then held wherever you need it.

The hog saddle that I used grips the rifle securely – it seemed to me that the heavier the rifle, the more stable the whole setup became. The hog saddle or any other fitting can be removed and the tripod used as a camera stand or binocular/spotting scope rest. The top bracket has a couple of small spirit levels fitted – a nice touch, but possibly surplus to requirements.

The whole of the top fitting of the sticks allows the rifle to be fixed rigidly if required by way of the combination of the ball joint clamp and a screw-in knob that locks the top swivelling system. Apart from the screws holding the pivoting

legs, which have three preset positions, and the body of the hog saddle, which appears to have a powder-coated finish, virtually every other part is made from either carbon fibre or high-density plastic, which of course makes the whole unit rust-free. Finally, the rubber feet can be replaced with metal spikes (supplied).

“ They are truly a top set of sticks, and have the potential to improve your shooting, especially at distance ”

From using the sticks, I have found the rubber feet to be ideal for virtually every situation. The spikes would be good in some circumstances, but not if there is any likelihood of them being used, for example, in concreted farmyard situations. Incidentally, keep an eye on the feet and make sure to keep them tightened up to prevent losing them.

From what I have seen of the Rekon sticks, I can only think that in normal

use these will last for years, but above all as far as their use is concerned, it's hard to see where they can be improved upon. Are they fit for purpose? Most certainly. They will cost you a fair bit – the basic setup with the pig saddle retails at £399.99 – but without a doubt they are a truly top set of sticks, and

have the potential to improve your shooting, especially at distance. Also, the facility to securely have your rifle on the sticks without having to hold them is a massive plus.

The Rekon comes in a cordura carrying bag, only 50cm long, together with six camo velcro pads for carrying or (suggested by my colleague Mark Ripley) attaching a digital caller control to, three metal feet, carrying sling, two hex keys and the two different height central pillars.

My thanks to Scott Country (01556 503587, scottcountry.co.uk) for the loan of the Rekon sticks, which I have since purchased! ■