



Power is the name of the game behind the introduction of Walther's new Pre Charged Pneumatic (PCP) repeating air rifle.

Maximathor – Walther's new 60 joule hunting air rifle, serious power and super accuracy

Walther has 'thrown down the gauntlet' to other mid-priced hunting PCP's by releasing the uncompromising Maximathor.

When it comes to sporting air rifles, as distinct from 10m target rifles, Walther has been relatively slow to add PCP models to their spring-piston dominated range. The new Maximathor hunting rifle and the recently introduced multi-purpose Rotex have joined the well-established Field Target oriented Dominator to give Walther a broad coverage of repeating PCP sporting air rifles.

It only took a quick look at the specifications of the PCP operated Walther Maximathor to realise that this new arrival from Frontier Arms is a serious, purpose built adult hunting rifle, where 'hunting' includes small edible game and pest destruction. It is 106cm long and weighs 4.5kg without scope. The Maximathor's hunting designation is supported by 60 joule of power, QD sling attachment studs, an eight round magazine, and in case we are still not sure of its purpose, the

smallest calibre available is 5.5mm (.22"). Maximathor rifles in 0.25" calibre are available from Frontier Arms on special order.

The Maximathor stores its pre-compressed air in a long, 267mm steel reservoir located below the barrel. A quick fill port near the pressure gauge at the front of the reservoir is accessible from either side. The manufacturer only recommends re-filling the reservoir in place, via the 'Quick fill hole'. Filled to the 200 BAR limit, it should give 40 shots without any drop in the point of impact. The reservoir comes with a service life of ten years, after this, a re-test by the manufacturer may extend it for a further ten years. Filling from a scuba tank is a quick and simple process with the optional fill tube assembly. It is the preferred method for refills, supplying clean and dry air with minimal time and effort when compared to a hand pump refill.

Maximathor's PCP operation is regulated, meaning that valving will supply the same pressure for a given number of shots until the main chamber pressure drops below the regulated chamber pressure. This system ensures

very consistent velocities leading to consistent point of impact and maximum accuracy. Unregulated PCP rifles tend to shoot fastest with a full reservoir pressure with a gradual decrease in velocity and drop in the point of impact. Some manufacturers of unregulated guns use mitigating mechanisms to even out velocities but top target and sporting air guns all use the more expensive and accurate regulated system.

Operating the repeating action of the eight shot Maximathor requires the same movements as a conventional bolt repeater. Lifting and pulling back the bolt handle cocks the trigger and the air metering mechanism. The forward stroke advances the rotary magazine to align the next pellet with the bolt whose continued forward movement pushes the pellet into the breech and seals it from the rear. The bolt locks the breech as the handle is turned down into the receiver slot, similar to most rimfires. Effective and fluent execution of the repeating action relies on a firm and full opening (backward) stroke of the bolt. This somehow assists the initial movement of



TOP: The Maximathor ensures that the attractive curvy stock is the main visual attraction,

LEFT: Author with the Maximathor in its outdoor environment,

INSET: The Maximathor at 50m - three shot group resulted in a ragged hole.



Rounded fore end is not ideal for bench shooting but in the hands of good shooters, some outstanding groups followed.

the magazine rotation and a similarly firm forward stroke will reliably complete the repeating process. It is important to stress the 'continuity' of the entire repeating process (within the limit of a reciprocating action).

A slow or timid reload attempt can result in loading a pellet without cocking the action. In such case, a pellet has most likely been loaded but the action won't fire. The easiest solution is to pull back the bolt firmly to cock the action, remove the magazine to avoid the possibility of double loading, close the bolt and rifle fired without the magazine in place.

The Maximathor has an eight shot rotary magazine, made of Aluminium with a hardwearing drive ratchet insert and a neoprene ring to apply sufficient force and friction to keep the pellets in place until pushed through by the bolt. The magazine can be removed and topped up any time its retaining axle is retracted and the bolt is sufficiently withdrawn. The indexing dimples are to the front and pellets must not protrude. Pellets up to 9mm long easily fit into the 10mm thick magazine. A typical hunting pellet such as the 18.6gr Crow Magnum is about 7.75mm in length and the 20.1gr Kodiak extra heavy pellets averaged 8.75mm, both worked well in the Walther magazine. A repeating feature is a big plus for a hunting rifle, it offers a faster second shot and minimises the single shot related task of keeping pellets clean and secure yet instantly ready for a quick reload, particularly on a cold morning.

Walther literature describes the trigger as an 'adjustable match trigger', which sounds good but tells us little. The manual tells us

the adjustment refers to 'trigger travel', but nothing more. In fact, turning the adjustment screw anti clockwise (there is no stop, but go too far and the action fails to cock) results in a very light resistance or 'free travel' of the trigger up to about 8mm. The next or second stage releases the trigger after about 5mm of blade tip movement, during which the effort on the trigger gradually increases to 1.35kg at the indistinct release point. Clockwise adjustment has a definite stop, and when adjusted to this point, trigger free travel is almost eliminated, and the trigger goes 'straight' into the 'second stage', which is identical to the release following the long free travel. A 1.35kg trigger release is a good weight for a hunting rifle, the two-stage type gradual release will be familiar to users of European target guns and most air rifle shooters but the fans of crisp triggers will need to get used to it.

Safety on the Maximathor is manually controlled, an important feature on a hunting rifle. An automatic safety on a hunting rifle is a nuisance because it is a hindrance to a fast repeat shot, particularly if the hunter forgets to flick off the safety in the heat of the moment. The manual safety of the Maximathor allows the hunter an unhindered fast repeat shot as well as the option of deliberately applying the safety, when time allows, thereby promoting his safety awareness. The safety is a plunger type within easy reach of the thumb, when pulled out to the 'safety on' position, a small bar pops up in the centre of the plunger to prevent any unintended bump from the side knocking it onto the 'fire' position.

Lothar Walther now supplies barrels for Walther and many other top firearm manufacturers as well as producing replacement and custom barrels and related accessories. The Maximathor has a 600mm long, blued chrome-moly barrel. It has a uniform 15mm diameter, a polymer barrel weight with a matching cap to protect the 1/2" UNF accessories thread and the muzzle. The micro-groove pattern rifling is cut by the button rifling method and has no trouble stabilising the extra heavy 20gr pellets. The barrel is blued after the finishing process, resulting in a low sheen finish, the only polished part of the rifle is the steel bolt handle.

Minelli of Italy makes the timber stock for the Maximathor, as well as for some other top line air rifles. The Maximathor stock has a chubby, hand filling fore end that envelopes part of the reservoir and its receiver. This is a compromise between aesthetics and ergonomics but neither loses much because the rifle looks good and handles well. The fore end grip area is generously covered with effective laser cut checkered panels and offers a very good grip. The inevitable voids caused by the inletting of the reservoir into the fore end are covered with a neat fitting polymer moulding. The pistol grip is steeply raked to suit deliberate off hand shooting and has checkered panels on both sides. It gives a good grip and trigger reach for the average hand. The high Monte Carlo style comb with a subtle hogback has sufficient thickness in the cheek-piece area to give good support for left or right handers. The scalloped bottom of the butt saves weight and gives it a distinctive appearance. This attractive stock complements the metal components well, resulting in an eye catching, attractive rifle unit. Quick detach sling bases are fitted, a must for a real hunting rifle, and a soft rubber recoil pad to protect the stock and prevent butt sliding. (Note that the neat holes in the QD sling bases do not fit the common 3.5mm sling attachment pins, 3.4mm pins are fine.) Trigger pull with the 20mm recoil pad is 365mm. The stock is made of European Beech, walnut stained and finished with a neat layer of clear satin protective coating. The shape of the

stock does not exclude left-handers but the bolt favours right hand operation.

Accuracy and power are both very important to a hunting air rifle. As to which is more important is a moot point because both are vital to success and therefore interdependent. There is little value in having the power to punch a pellet through both sides of a rabbit's head at 60m if the rifle shoots 100mm groups. The good news about the Maximathor is that both of these vital characteristics are there in the top performance bracket ensuring outstanding hunting potential. Accuracy at 25m on a breezy day was well within hunting requirements, grouping around 16mm, and at 50 metres on a much calmer day, it was quite outstanding regularly putting pellets through the same ragged hole. The real bonus is that the Maximathor

“ The real bonus is that the Maximathor achieves top accuracy with genuine heavy hunting pellets ”

achieves top accuracy with genuine heavy hunting pellets, thus it avoids a potential compromise between pellet effectiveness and accuracy. A further advantage is the relatively quiet report of the heavy subsonic (1000fps) pellet against the supersonic crack of average weight pellets in the Maximathor.

Power was calculated on two different weight pellets, 14.0gr Trophy pellets at 1150fps achieved 55.7 joule (J) or 41ft.lb of energy. The very accurate Kodiak extra heavy pellets averaged 1000 fps at the muzzle, weighed 20.1gr and produced 60.5J or 44.6 ft.lb. (Pellet weight affects the power output of a given air rifle in a complex manner, in this case, the heavier pellet produced more power.) To put this performance

into perspective, the power limit of 12 foot-pounds or 16.26 joule, used in enlightened countries for licence free air rifles, is considered sufficient power for humane hunting of small game such as rabbits. The Maximathor has well over three and a half times more power which means increased shooting distance, or bigger game and a much higher likelihood of a humane kill with a marginally placed shot. Very few mainstream hunting air rifles match the power of the Maximathor.

Handling of the Maximathor is very good as long as the hefty 5kg weight is not a liability (it should not be for a typical adult male). Manageable weight is an asset for accurate shooting particularly from off hand, rested or leaning positions. The wide fore end suits various holds and the firm grip for the front hand combines with the non-slip recoil pad to make reloading at the shoulder an easy task. A bipod can be fitted to the front sling stud to help achieve the hunting accuracy needed at the extended range of this potent rifle. Removal, filling and replacement of the magazine is a simple task. When cycling the action to load or reload, it pays to have a shoulder or thigh behind the butt to achieve the firmness of bolt operation required for reliable magazine rotation, at least until the action is 'run in' and loosens up. We can say that the Maximathor handles well in any field shooting position and its operation is fully reliable once the user becomes familiar with the rifle.

The Walther Maximathor is an outstanding PCP air rifle designed exclusively for the hunter with generous doses of the main features hunters will want. Power and accuracy are outstanding with faultless reliability and handling. Eight shot repeating action, rifle sling bases, a bipod use option, a forty shot reservoir capacity and a two-stage match trigger complete the hunting biased features of the Maximathor. The 5kg weight will not suit everyone but it does help offhand accuracy. The stock suits left or right handed use with right hand bolt operation. At \$1250 RRP this mid-priced rifle represents good value as its vital features are up there with the top price bracket guns which retail at twice the price. The good looking and comprehensively effective Maximathor will interest many Australian air rifle hunters. 🔫

SPECS WALTHER MAXIMATHOR

Manufacturer:

Carl Walther

Model:

Maximathor

Calibre:

5.5 mm / .22"

Power source:PCP

Fill pressure (BAR): 200

Energy (joule / ft.lb):

60 / 44.2

Weight (kg): 4.5

Length (mm): 1060

Action: Bolt repeater

Magazine Capacity: 8

Match trigger,

Two-stage adjustable

Safety: Manual

Barrel Length (mm): 600

Sight mounting:

Dovetail 11mm

Stock material:

Beech (walnut stain)

Price (RR): \$ 1250

Optional Extras:

Scuba fill tube & probe assy.
\$100

Rifle with 6x 42 AO scope,
RR \$ 1375

1. Safety plunger has its own safety bar in the centre to minimise chance of accidental bump onto 'fire' position.

2. The bolt, showing the pellet inserting probe and the breech sealing O-ring, and the magazine retaining axle are partially withdrawn to show their position and function in the magazine slot.

3. Pressure gauge makes filling and knowing when to fill easy.

4. A fill hose with probe and relief valve is an optional extra, a must-have if filling from scuba tank.

5. Eight shot magazine is compact and easy to operate.



1



2



3



4



5