

Walther 1250 Dominator air rifle

by Technical Advisor Brendan Atkinson



There are a number of high-powered multishot air rifles on the market at the moment and airgun hunting in this country has a small (by comparison) but dedicated following. Small game such as rats, pigeons and even rabbits can be taken humanely with an air gun, if used at sensible ranges. The Hunting & Conservation Branch of the SSAA in my home town has often engaged in removing hoards of feral pigeons infesting certain areas not usually available to the general public.

The latest air rifle to be offered for review is the Walther 1250 Dominator in .177-calibre. This is a multishot air rifle and a powerful one at that. It has claimed muzzle velocities that are supersonic, at around 1200fps with pellets in the 7-grain weight. It is described as a hunting rifle

and although it is designed for longer range plinking and hunting, it is claimed to owe its design to the engineering used on the Walther LG300 range of target rifles. It has often been stated that motor racing has a flow-on effect to road cars and this is a similar example of a top-flight competition gun being adapted for the everyday hunter.

To anyone remotely interested in shooting, the name Walther conjures up images of extremely accurate products that are used for all sorts of purposes, from law enforcement to hunting to competing at the highest level of the shooting sports. The box we received from distributor Frontier Arms contained the rifle with scope, a suppressor, a bipod, a spare magazine and the fittings for recharging the air cylinder. There is a comprehensive illustrated owner's manual and it is strongly recommended that the new owner study this before attempting to use the 1250.

The 1250 is a PCP repeating air rifle, with a clip-in eight-shot rotary magazine. By means of a small bolt action, the pellets are fed directly into the barrel ready for firing. Propulsion is supplied from an air cylinder, which can be charged to as high as

300 bar (4350psi). This is claimed to allow for as many as 100 shots at 40 joules (29.5 ft-lb).

As supplied, the trigger broke fairly cleanly at around 4.5lb. There was some variation shown when we tested it with our trigger pull measuring device. A competent gunsmith could probably reduce this trigger pull weight if required. If the air rifle were mine, I would prefer a more useable weight of around 2lb. The safety catch engages every time the action is cycled, but can also be engaged at any time with a simple pull. It's just a matter of remembering to move the safety to the 'fire' position before each shot.



The eight-shot magazine is now in place and the bolt is closed. One merely has to release the safety catch and the gun is ready to fire.



With the bolt action in the 'open' position and the magazine removed, one can clearly see the plunger that pushes a pellet into the barrel.

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The 23.62"-long parallel steel .177-calibre barrel is rifled, with no provision for open sights to be fitted. However, the receiver has an 11mm dovetail for attaching scope mounts.

In the box was a device that can be attached to the muzzle of the rifle. It is described as a 'compensator', is very light in weight and uses two grub screws to hold it in place. This compensator does not silence the report. In fact, standing some 20m from the 1250 Dominator, I could not really detect a difference with or without the device fitted. There also appeared to be little difference in impact point. If appearances count for anything though, the rifle looks better with the compensator in place.

The stock on the 1250 Dominator is of fibreglass-reinforced matte-black synthetic construction. Although the bolt is on the right-hand side, it is described as being 'ambidextrous' and certainly the dual Monte Carlo cheekpieces would help a southpaw.

There is moulded chequering on the forearm and pistol grip, but it is quite shallow and not really effective on sweaty hands. There is also a moulded and vented hard rubber recoil pad, which is hardly an issue with an airgun. The front of the fore-end clips off to reveal the attachment point for the air reservoir. No swivel mounting points are supplied.

The scope

Immediately obvious in the photographs is the large riflescope fitted to the Walther. Designated as the FT, the power range of the review model was 8-32x56. It has a mil-dot reticle and one-eighth of a minute of angle click values. The unusual front angle of the telescope is claimed to be a sunshade. Scope lens covers are included.

The vertical and horizontal adjusters are clearly graduated and have the added function whereby if the knobs are pushed inward, they will freewheel around to a zero reading if required. A focus ring is supplied on the end of the eyepiece. The large wheel on the left-hand side of the scope is for making adjustments to the parallax. This becomes more critical as the power is

The safety is at the rear of the action and sets automatically whenever the bolt is drawn back.



increased. With the aid of this wheel, even minute corrections can be made. If desired for reasons of space or whatever, the outer wheel can be removed and a much smaller inner wheel with identical numbering/spacing is then exposed.

A set of very sturdy mounts were provided. These feature a large pin to hold the base and four screws on each ring. As the recoil of a PCP airgun is just about negligible, nothing is going to shake loose there.

We are unsure as to exactly where this scope was manufactured, but it was of good quality, with a very clear picture under all conditions tested.

Range testing

A powerful PCP air rifle like this one can reach out and touch things at greater distances than cheaper offerings - that's what you pay the big bucks for. With this in mind, targets were placed at 25, 50 and 75m and a variety of pellets were used to seek out the best accuracy.

We soon discovered that this air rifle had its likes and dislikes. As a matter of interest, a firm hand had to be used on the bolt action and it must be pulled right back to make things operate as they should. Failure to do this will result in a misfire and because a pellet would have been pushed into the barrel by the bolt plunger, it must be removed with a cleaning rod before firing again.

Pellets suitable for this powerful air rifle should be of the diabolo type. Diabolo-style pellets are probably the most common ones seen and feature a narrow, pinched waist and a hollow skirt. The skirt actually creates drag as the pellet flies through the air and stops it from becoming unstable and tumbling. At the leading end, there are pellets that are pointy, flat or rounded. Flat-faced ones are usually used for target shooting, as they cut near-perfect round holes in the paper.

Part of the fun of using an air rifle is finding the pellet that works best for your own particular application. The use of BB-style round or steel pellets (or darts) is strictly advised against in this rifle. Using felt cleaning wads, which are fired through the barrel, is also advised against.

Wind indicators had been placed strategically on the range and conditions were very good for outdoor shooting. Starting at 25m, I had no problem finding pellets that would shoot eight shots into around 25mm. Why eight shots? Well, that's how many the magazine holds.

The scope adjusting knobs are clearly marked in one-eighth-minute clicks and have a 'set to zero' facility. The larger wheel is for parallax adjustment.



The air reservoir screws in under the barrel and can be pumped up to 300 bar.

Moving out to 50m resulted in an increase in group size and I found pellets that would just hold 32mm for eight shots. I also found a few that shot poorly at this range. Just like a .22 rimfire, it was a case of finding a combination that worked well. At the end of the test, it was obvious that spitzer-shaped pellets performed a lot better in the 1250 Dominator than flat-fronted ones. Perhaps the flat-fronted match-type pellets were not designed to be shot at these speeds. The pointy ones were definitely more effective on pigeons - more on that subject later.

At 75m, we shot a number of eight-shot groups that were largish when measured overall, but each one contained at least five shots into less than 45mm. Longer range air rifle shooters will no doubt scoff at this, but for a brand-new rifle, I was impressed. No doubt, with more usage and a wider variety of pellets, even tighter groups may be possible.

The main bugbear with PCP airguns is keeping them charged up during an



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The 1250 Dominator is an excellent air rifle for cleaning feral pigeons out of sheds. There are 27 'flying rats' in this pile.

extended shooting session. One either uses an air tank or the tedious task of recharging them with a hand pump - I strongly recommend the former method! As a matter of interest, a spare air cylinder for the rifle will set you back around \$450, should you wish to carry one. The air cylinders have a life of 10 years.

Field testing

I would much prefer to use a .22-calibre air rifle if hunting small game, but as we had a .177, I had to locate some heavier pellets. A tin of H&N Silver Point pellets was sourced and these weigh almost a constant 11.3 grains. Try as we might, we could not locate a rabbit, so a bit of pigeon culling was arranged.

An Adelaide Hills builder has a shed with an open end, in which he stores his supplies. Feral pigeons roost up at night and deposit droppings over everything, much to his annoyance. Yes, he was very keen for us to do some 'testing'.

I loaded the two magazines that came with the rifle and sneaked quietly into the shed while a mate held a very low powered torch. At ranges from 6 to around 30m, the air rifle was very effective. I shot 25 feral pigeons without a miss and none required a second shot. There were two escapees that flew out of the open door, but shortly after, they made the mistake of landing back on the roof, giving me an easy 25m shot to remove them.

It was almost ungentlemanly at those ranges, but I don't have much time for these flying rats that spread lice and manure. What's more, it was an enjoyable half hour or so. The scope was a little too powerful for this closer range stuff and if pigeon shooting is your intention, then it would be wise to fit a lower powered unit.

Shooting in these light conditions did

highlight one thing about this rifle - you must count your shots, as a couple of times I 'fired' with a perfect hold and the bird just sat there, as there was no pellet in the barrel. In daylight, one can see the pellets in the magazine better.

Conclusions

This is a well-made and well presented air rifle, as one would expect from the Walther stable. At around \$1550 for the complete package at the time of writing, it is not a cheap item, but it appears to be good value for money.

It is not the quietest airgun around either, but at the sort of velocities that are attained, that is not surprising. Velocity requires higher pressure and that equals noise.

Read the instructions and look after this unit and many years of happy shooting should be the reward.

The Walther 1250 Dominator air rifle was supplied by Frontier Arms. ●

Specifications

Manufacturer: Carl Walther GmbH, Sportwaffen, Germany
Model: 1250 Dominator
Action: Bolt
Barrel: Rifled, 26.62" in length
Magazine: Eight-shot rotary
Trigger: Single-stage, pull weight 4.5lb
Stock: Matte-black synthetic
Propulsion Method: PCP (precharge)
Calibre: .177
Overall Length: 40.94"
Weight: 5.73lb
RRP: \$1550