

BLUE COLLAR RIFLE

DT SPORT 5.56

CRITTER CLEANER

Del-Ton's DT Sport rifle delivers excellent fit and finish in a tidy package that you can carry all day and trek through the woods.

A 5.8-POUND RANCH HAND THAT CAN PEST PLINK WITH THE BEST OF 'EM AND NOT BREAK THE BANK!

By Jorge Amselle



Raccoons digging up your vegetable garden and tearing up your trash? Del-Ton has just the right 5.56mm varmint prescription to keep out unwanted critters.

» There is a school of thought that you should eat anything you hunt, but have you ever tried stewed groundhog or fricasseed coyote? I've had to eat plenty of crow in my time, but never literally. The fact is that a good deal of hunting is geared towards reducing the population of nuisance animals, critters that damage crops and present a danger to domestic animals and livestock.

In wooded and open field settings within 100 yards and against small and medium-sized game, like what we have in my home state of Virginia, a .223-caliber AR rifle can be absolutely ideal. Del-Ton Inc., an online business out of Elizabethtown, North Carolina, that focuses on the



This rifle had zero malfunctions and proved accurate with all types of ammo, producing 2-MOA or better groups.

AR, has recently produced a new hunting rifle called the DT Sport.

SPORT SPECS

This basic AR rifle doesn't come with a heavy, long-range varmint barrel, and it isn't chambered in some new grizzly-killing super round. It is, at its core, a functional AR rifle built to be used in the real world without a bunch of bells and whistles. It also weighs a feathery 5.8 pounds. Anyone who spends enough time walking around in the woods carrying a rifle will quickly come to appreciate that number.

Hunting regulations, of course, vary widely from state to state, but in Virginia hunters must use .23 caliber or larger on

deer or bear. This still leaves plenty of uses for the .223 Remington, including small game and furbearers. Shooting a rabbit or squirrel with an AR isn't going to leave much for the stewpot, but groundhogs, which can grow to over 2 feet in length and weigh more than 10 pounds, and coyotes, which can weigh over 40 pounds, are another story.

The DT Sport is a standard direct gas impingement semi-auto rifle chambered for 5.56x45mm. It features a lightweight contour 16-inch 4140 chrome-moly (not chrome-lined) barrel with a 1-in-9-inch twist rate and a manganese phosphate finish. The 4140 chrome-moly steel has slightly less carbon content than Mil-Spec

Main Photo Sean Utley

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barrels, but retains significant durability and corrosion resistance.

The 1-in-9-inch twist rate allows the barrel to stabilize a wider range of bullet weights, including very-low-weight expanding ammunition that is extremely effective against small game. This twist rate will also adequately stabilize heavier bullet weights, although many prefer a faster twist rate for the heaviest .223 ammunition, such as 1-in-8 or 1-in-7.

The DT Sport was designed as a commercial rifle from the ground up, so don't look for expensive Mil-Spec details here. The feed ramps, grooves cut at the back of the barrel extension to aid in reliable feeding or rounds from the magazine, are cut to a standard width and depth—not the enhanced M4 style.



Sean Wiley Photos

With a quality optic mounted, the Del-Ton Sport proves it is an extremely effective varmint and pest eliminator.



A threaded muzzle and A2 flash hider top off the 1-in-9-inch-twist, chrome-moly barrel.



The usual controls are accented by Del-Ton's distinctive Sport logo on the magazine well.

The barrel does feature a standard threaded muzzle with a removable A2 flash hider, however, the front sight base is a standard rifle variety and not the "F"-marked base for carbine use. The upper receiver has an A3 flattop with indexing marks to allow the user to more easily return a removed optic to the same place and maintain zero. CAR handguards with single heat shields effectively protect the shooter's hands, as does the carbine-length gas tube.

The bolt and bolt carrier are both phosphated 8620 steel, chrome-lined, and the bolt is HPT/MPI certified—not something you see a lot of in an entry-level rifle. This involves subjecting the metal part to a high-pressure strength test and magnetic particle inspection (MPI), which uses a magnetic field to detect any imperfections in the surface or subsurface of the part. This ensures that only the highest quality parts are being used. The bolt itself has a commercial (not M16) contour but is otherwise built to Mil-Spec.

Del-Ton's attention to detail is such that they provide a lot more Mil-Spec features

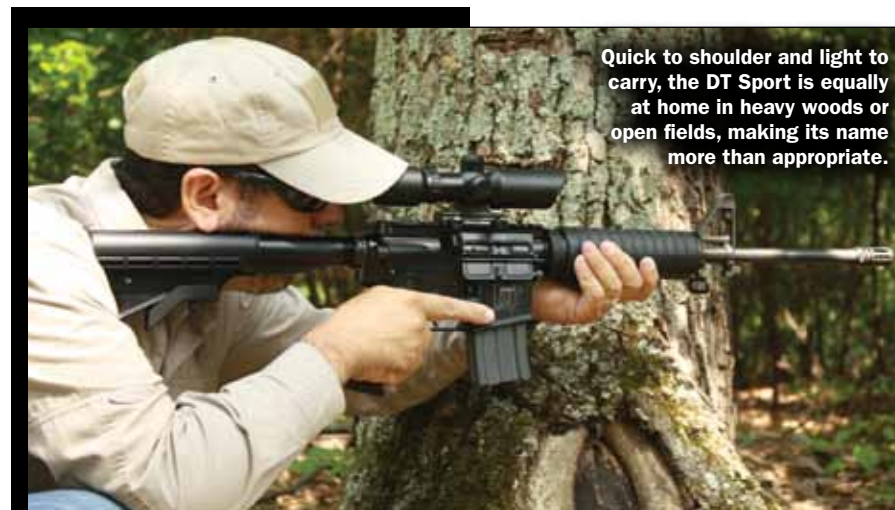
than are normally found on commercial AR rifles, especially ones marketed as sport or lightweight. This extends to the gas carrier key, which is fixed with grade-8 screws that have been properly staked and sealed. Nearly all manufacturers will stake their gas keys in some way, but a sure sign of quality is a properly staked gas key that shows a hammer and punch have been used with enough force to move sufficient metal into the carrier key screws. If these screws are not properly staked, they could become loose under fire.

The lower receiver includes all of the standard controls, right-side-mounted for-

ward assist, shell deflector, steel dust cover and aluminum magazine release. The left side includes the safety selector and bolt release. One item that is different is the aluminum triggerguard, a nice upgrade over the far cheaper and more common plastic guards.

The M4-type collapsible buttstock has six positions for length of pull and is made from a fiber-reinforced polymer over a commercial buffer tube. The unit felt very sturdy and included a steel sling swivel at the heel. Inside, Del-Ton includes a standard carbine 3-ounce buffer as opposed to a Mil-Spec "H"-marked heavy buffer. Both the upper and lower receivers are forged from Mil-Spec 7075 T6 aluminum with a hardcoat anodized finish. The fit between the two was well executed and exhibited only slight play. The finish, however, was very well done, smoothly applied and even throughout. The rifle also featured Del-Ton's logo nicely engraved on the lower receiver and a distinct "DT Sport" logo laser etched on the right side of the magazine well.

Del-Ton ships their rifles in a sturdy, padded, desert-tan-colored hard case with the Del-Ton logo and includes the owner's manual, sling, a complete Mil-Spec butt-



Quick to shoulder and light to carry, the DT Sport is equally at home in heavy woods or open fields, making its name more than appropriate.

“The rifle was tested right out of the box, and there were no malfunctions of any sort over several days, shooting with no maintenance conducted in between sessions.”

stock cleaning kit (which fits in the standard buttstock, not the collapsible one), a chamber safety flag that also doubles as a handy takedown tool, and two 30-round magazines. The extra magazine is something many will appreciate; it's an inexpensive way to showcase the company's customer-driven approach.

RANGE RESULTS

I used a variety of ammunition types and bullet weights to test the Del-Ton rifle. The

SPECIFICATIONS

DEL-TON DT SPORT

CALIBER:	5.56mm
BARREL:	16 inches
OA LENGTH:	36.375" (stock extended), 32.625" (stock collapsed)
WEIGHT:	5.8 pounds (empty)
STOCK:	Six-position collapsible stock
SIGHTS:	None
ACTION:	Semi-auto
FINISH:	Black hardcoat anodized
CAPACITY:	30
PRICE:	\$699



PERFORMANCE

LOAD	VELOCITY	AVG. ACCURACY	BEST
Black Hills 68 Heavy Match HP	2,624	3.3	3.0
Federal 55 FMJ Boat Tail	2,782	2.4	2.0
Winchester 50 Silvertip	2,971	2.6	1.4

Note: Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in FPS by Competition Electronics ProChrono chronograph, and accuracy in inches for three 5-shot groups at 100 yards.

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The author's best group of the day measured under 1.5 inches at 100 yards with Winchester's 50-grain Silvertip ammo.

rifle was tested right out of the box, and there were no malfunctions of any sort over several days, shooting with no maintenance conducted in between sessions. Accuracy results were conducted from a bench rest using a Caldwell Matrix shooting rest.

I mounted the new Kruger Optical Tac-Driver 1.5-5x32 riflescope on the gun for accuracy testing. This small, rugged scope paired off very well with the DT Sport rifle and the 1.5X to 5X variable magnification allowed for more than sufficient precision at 100 yards and rapid target acquisition at closer ranges. The adjustable red and green illuminated mil-dot reticle is also well-suited for use in various early morning and low-light conditions and includes five levels of intensity in each color.

At the lowest level of magnification, the scope provided sharp crosshairs and easy both-eyes-open targeting. Windage and elevation adjustments were easy at 0.5-MOA clicks and the scope includes multi-coated optics inside a waterproof/fogproof aluminum body.

In terms of accuracy, the rifle consistently placed about 2- to 3-MOA, which is acceptable for medium-sized game at distance, but I would keep the rabbits and squirrels within 50 yards. As expected, lighter bullets stabilized better in the 1-in-9-inch twist barrel and exhibited greater accuracy. The best results came from Winchester's 50-grain lead-free Ballistic Silvertip. This extremely lightweight bullet had the highest velocity as measured on the chronograph from a 16-inch barrel and fea-

tures a polycarbonate tip to resist deformation. Inside the copper alloy jacket is a fragmenting copper core that disintegrates on impact. This round is specifically designed for use on small game, such as varmints and up to coyote sizes, and it should prove devastating in this application.

This was one easy-handling rifle and a pleasure to shoot. Magazine changes were easily accomplished from the standing and support positions during a full shooting session with zero arm fatigue. Despite the rifle's very low weight, recoil was negligible and fast follow-up shots on target were no problem.

The DT Sport does suffer from the one predicament that is common to far too many AR rifles: a poor trigger. On the heavy side at 7.5 pounds, this standard single-stage trigger exhibited a significant amount of creep, which is the distance the trigger moves under tension before the gun fires. On a single-stage trigger, there is no take-up or slack, and as soon as the trigger squeeze starts, the trigger is engaging the sear. A trigger with too much creep can make it difficult for the shooter to tell when the shot will break and can adversely affect accuracy.

This is one area that can use improvement, particularly when precision is needed. Fortunately, there are a number of aftermarket drop-in triggers that can be easily installed and had in various weights, as well as true two-stage varieties, to fit a shooter's preference.

DEL-TON QUALITY

Del-Ton seems committed to providing shooters a good, quality rifle at a very reasonable price, and that is something we can all be thankful for. The DT Sport can function equally well as a ranch gun or to eliminate pests, all in a lightweight package that delivers everything you need and nothing you don't. With the collapsible stock and adjustable length of pull, this can also make for a good youth rifle. All Del-Ton rifles come with a lifetime warranty, and all parts and accessories are American-made. As the modern sporting rifle continues to evolve and improve its use in various hunting applications, Del-Ton is sure to grow and meet those needs head on. ☉

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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