





SUPERLITE

BUILT ON A NEW, HYBRID ACTION, THE BRAND-NEW HOWA SUPERLITE FROM LEGACY SPORTS INTERNATIONAL WEIGHS LESS THAN 5 POUNDS AND IS EXCEPTIONALLY ACCURATE.

BY JOEL J. HUTCHCROFT

WHEN I WAS A YOUNGER man (roughly half my current age), I wondered what all the fuss was about with lightweight rifles. At the time my favorite centerfire long gun was a .30-06 M1 Garand that weighed just shy of 10 pounds, and I didn't feel the need for a lighter rifle. Granted, I didn't hunt mountain goats or Dahl sheep with that heavy, old rifle, and in fact, I have never hunted either of those game animals to this very day with any rifle. However, now in my ripe old age, I have come to appreciate the utility of a lightweight hunting rifle. Who said old dogs can't learn new tricks?

The rifle's bolt has a hollowed-out bolt knob, pressure vents in the body, dual locking lugs, and an M16-style extractor. The bolt-face is trued and squared with the barrel's chamber.

The good news is there is a brand-new lightweight bolt-action hunting rifle from Howa that's being imported by Legacy Sports International, and I've been shooting it quite a bit the last few weeks. I haven't hunted with it yet, unless you consider stalking and shooting the swinging steel plates I have placed throughout the small stand of timber on my family's farm. I am pleased to report the new rifle is pure joy to tote and shoot.

Howa History

Before I get into the details of the new SUPERLITE, here's a quick review of Howa's history for anyone who isn't familiar with the company.

Howa Machinery Ltd. is a Japanese machinery manufacturer known internationally for producing military and civilian firearms. The firm also manufactures machine tools, sweeping vehicles, windows,



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and doors. Originally, the Toyoda Loom Works Ltd. was established by Sakichi Toyoda in 1907 and began manufacturing textile machines. It started producing hand grenades in 1932. In 1941 the firm merged with Showa Heavy Industries that had been established in 1936 to produce rifles, artillery shells, and airplane parts, and the name was changed to Howa Heavy Industries Ltd. It went on to manufacture the Arisaka Type 99 and Type 38 rifles along with other armaments. In 1945, after World War II, it was renamed Howa Machinery Ltd. and returned to manufacturing textile machines.

In 1952 the company was allowed to produce armaments again, starting with hand grenades, 81mm mortars, and airplane bomb parts. In 1959 Howa entered the U.S. hunting-rifle market.

During the early days of the Cold War, Howa made copies of the U.S. M1 Garand and the M1 carbine for the Japanese Self Defense Forces (JSDF). Other firearms designed and made by Howa and used by the JSDF include the Howa Type 64, Howa Type 89, Howa Type 96, Howa Type 20, Howa 84mm Recoilless Rifle, and the AR-18 and AR-180 (licensed production for Armalite Inc.).

Additionally, Howa has produced civilian guns and components for Mossberg, Smith & Wesson, and Weatherby. Models include the S&W Model 1000 semiautomatic shotgun of the 1970s and 1980s. (I owned one of those, and it was an excellent gun.) Other guns were the Howa Model 300 semiautomatic carbine, the Howa Golden Bear bolt-action rifle, and

The SUPERLITE is put up in Stocky's Carbon stock, and it is dipped with Kryptek Altitude camo finish. It also sports a Limbsaver recoil pad.



the current Model 1500 bolt-action rifles. Howa firearms are distributed in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

Flyweight Features

Called the SUPERLITE, this new lightweight bolt-action rifle is built on a hybrid Howa Model 1500 action. Initially, the rifle is being chambered for 6.5 Creedmoor and .308 Winchester (I have the .308 version), but instead of using the standard short-action-length receiver, it has what Legacy says is a “reduced short action,” which is in-between a normal short action and Howa’s familiar Mini action. The machined receiver on my rifle measures 5.44 inches long and 1.18 inches in diameter. The forged bolt is 6.31 inches long from the end of the shroud to the extractor at the front of the recessed boltface, and it has dual opposing locking lugs. It has an integral bolt handle and pressure vents as well as a hollowed-out bolt knob. The boltface is trued and squared to the chamber, and the extractor and ejector are M16 style.

This handy rifle weighs less than five pounds unloaded and without a scope (4.7 pounds, according to Legacy). With the Crimson Trace Brushline Pro 3-12X 42mm scope I’ve been using (you can read more about the scope in my Quick Shot report on page 58 of this issue), the rig weighs 6 pounds, 2 ounces, according to my digital scale, and that includes the rifle, the 5.45-inch-long 12-slot Picatinny rail that comes with the rifle, the scope, and the scope rings.



The SUPERLITE is built on Howa’s new “reduced short action” Model 1500 receiver. It’s shorter than a standard short action but not as short as the company’s familiar Mini action.



The safety is a three-position type that allows the bolt to be removed with the safety engaged.

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The rifle has a cold-hammer-forged steel barrel that's 20 inches long, tapered, and threaded at the muzzle end. My rifle's barrel is 1.11 inches in diameter at the receiver and 0.57 inch in diameter at the muzzle, including the thread protector. The threads are 1/2-28.

The stock is from the good folks at Stocky's, and it is made of carbon fiber. It has the patented AccuBlock lug bed, Kryptek Altitude camo pattern, a half-inch-thick Limbsaver recoil pad, and sling swivel studs in the butt and the fore-end. The length of pull is 13.25 inches. Overall length is 39 inches.

The safety is a three-position type that allows the bolt to be removed with the safety engaged. The bolt release is located on the left-hand side of the receiver.

The SUPERLITE comes with a two-stage match trigger (our sample's trigger pull averaged 3 pounds, 4 ounces over a series of 10 measurements with my RCBS trigger pull scale). It's called



The SUPERLITE's trigger is a two-stage match trigger that provides consistent, crisp trigger pulls. Our sample's pull averaged 3 pounds, 4 ounces.

the Howa Activated Controlled Trigger (H.A.C.T.), and it delivers a consistent, predictable pull with a slight amount of take-up and overtravel. I found it to be creep-free, light, and crisp. It's a darn good trigger indeed.

The rifle also comes with a detachable magazine. The magazine fits almost flush with the bottom of the stock when inserted, and it holds three rounds of .308 Win. ammo.

Top-Flight Accuracy

Speaking of ammo, I fired nine factory loads through the SUPERLITE from a benchrest at 100 yards, and the rifle's overall average for three, five-shot groups with each load was 1.13 inches. With an average accuracy of 0.93 inch, top honors went to the Winchester Subsonic 185-grain Power-Point loading. But

the Hornady 155-grain OTM and the HSM Low Recoil 150-grain Tipped loads were not far behind. The results are listed in the accompanying accuracy and velocity chart. I think you can see that with the SUPERLITE, you don't sacrifice anything in terms of accuracy in order to have an easy-toting light-weight hunting rifle.

The SUPERLITE rifle comes with a sub-MOA, three-shot group accuracy guarantee with premium ammunition, and it is covered by Howa's 100-percent

LEGACY SPORTS HOWA SUPERLITE ACCURACY & VELOCITY					
AMMUNITION	VEL. (FPS)	E.S. (FPS)	S.D. (FPS)	ENERGY (FT-LBS)	100-YD. ACC. (IN.)
.308 Win., 20-in. Barrel					
Hornady American Whitetail 150-gr. InterLock SP	2872	34	16	2747	1.03
HSM Low Recoil 150-gr. Tipped	2198	7	4	1609	0.96
Hornady 155-gr. OTM	2691	38	19	2492	0.99
HSM 165-gr. GameKing SBT	2476	18	9	2246	1.01
SIG SAUER Elite Hunter 165-gr. CET	2785	24	13	2841	1.00
Federal 168-gr. Tactical Bonded Tip	2590	28	11	2502	1.09
Federal Low Recoil 170-gr. JSP	1839	55	21	1276	2.15
Winchester 180-gr. Silvertip	2521	43	21	2540	1.03
Winchester Subsonic 185-gr. Power-Point	1165	48	26	557	0.93
NOTES: Accuracy is the average of three, five-shot groups fired from a sandbag benchrest rest. Velocity is the average of five rounds measured 12 feet from the gun's muzzle.					



The rifle has a 20-inch-long, cold-hammer-forged barrel with a threaded muzzle.

lifetime warranty to the original buyer for manufacturer defects. It covers faulty, defective, or broken parts due to manufacturing and provides repair or replacement at no additional cost. The firearm needs to be registered within 30 days of purchase. I didn't experience any faulty, defective, or broken parts with the sample SUPERLITE, but it's reassuring to know if something happens down the road, it'll be covered.

Somewhere along the way I got rid of that heavy old M1 Garand I mentioned at the beginning of this report. I still have a couple of heavy-barreled varmint bolt-action rifles that aren't exactly lightweights; however, I'm tending toward lighter-weight, more-compact rifles these days. This new SUPERLITE fits my fancy perfectly. It's easy to carry afield. It's surprisingly

accurate. And it's comfortable to shoot. Dare I say that you could do just about anything you need to do with a bolt-action rifle with the new SUPERLITE chambered for the effective .308 Winchester cartridge.

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MANUFACTURER	Howa
IMPORTER	Legacy Sports Int'l legacysports.com
TYPE	Bolt-action repeater
CALIBER	.308 Winchester
MAGAZINE CAPACITY	3 rounds
BARREL	20 in.
OVERALL LENGTH	39 in.
WEIGHT, EMPTY	4.7 lbs.
STOCK	Stocky's Carbon
LENGTH OF PULL	13.25 in.
FINISH	Matte blued receiver and barrel, Kryptek Altitude camo stock
SIGHTS	None; Picatinny rail on receiver
TRIGGER	Two stage, 3.25-lb. pull (as tested)
SAFETY	Three position
MSRP	\$1,399



The detachable magazine holds three rounds of ammunition. Currently, the SUPERLITE is being chambered for the 6.5 Creedmoor and the .308 Winchester.

SPRINGFIELD ARMORY HELLCAT RDP™



RAPID DEFENSE PACKAGE

The Hellcat® is now offered in the Rapid Defense Package (RDP™) configuration. Paired with a HEX™ micro red dot and a single port compensator the Hellcat RDP delivers fast target acquisition and rapid, accurate follow-up shots. In addition, the new Hellcat RDP is offered with an optional ambidextrous manual safety.