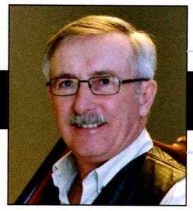


ALPINE RIFLECRAFT

I've been taking a young high schooler out on a few shooting excursions lately, with a trip to do some pigeon control using airguns a recent outing. As usual, when the sun set the pigeons stopped moving and we headed home. I had a new 6.5 Creedmoor along, just in case we spotted a coyote, and sure enough, a short time later, we saw one trying to dig out a springtime gopher in a nearby field. I knew if we stopped, the coyote would run for the hills, so we drove on by, switched drivers, and got turned around. With Daniel now behind the wheel, we drove by the coyote again, stopping just long enough for me to bail out into the ditch with the rifle. The coyote went on high alert but calmed immediately as the truck drove away. Unseen, I slithered up to the fence line, dropped the coyote, and this 6.5 Creedmoor by Alpine Riflecraft had its first kill.

Alpine Riflecraft

That name might be new to a lot of readers, but it's worth getting to know; partly because of the excellent quality of rifles they produce and partly because Alpine is an Alberta company. Started by Mike Drury of Calgary in 2020, Alpine, as the name suggests, specializes in building ultra-light rifles for mountain hunters. The one he graciously loaned me weighs in at 4.5-pounds without optic, sling or ammo. That's light!

Mike is a mechanical engineer by trade, with a two-decade passion for sheep hunting in Alberta's mountains. That, and a love for classic rifles started him dreaming about the perfect mountain rifle, with the rifle you see pictured here the result. It took a lot of testing and a few prototypes before he was satisfied with the design, and then limited production began within the last year. Mike figures he nailed it, because the company motto is, "The Mountain Rifle, Perfected."

Rifle Specifics

A close examination of the rifle I tested reflects Mike's love of classic rifles like pre-64 Model 70 Winchesters. However, he tells me he also loves the latest technology. Therefore, the action is titanium, with a unique footprint that isn't a copy of anything else on the market. It's sized to accept short-action cartridges and features an integral recoil lug. Scope mounting is accomplished using a unique system as well, with bases machined integrally into the action. Custom rings are necessary, so these are supplied with each gun.

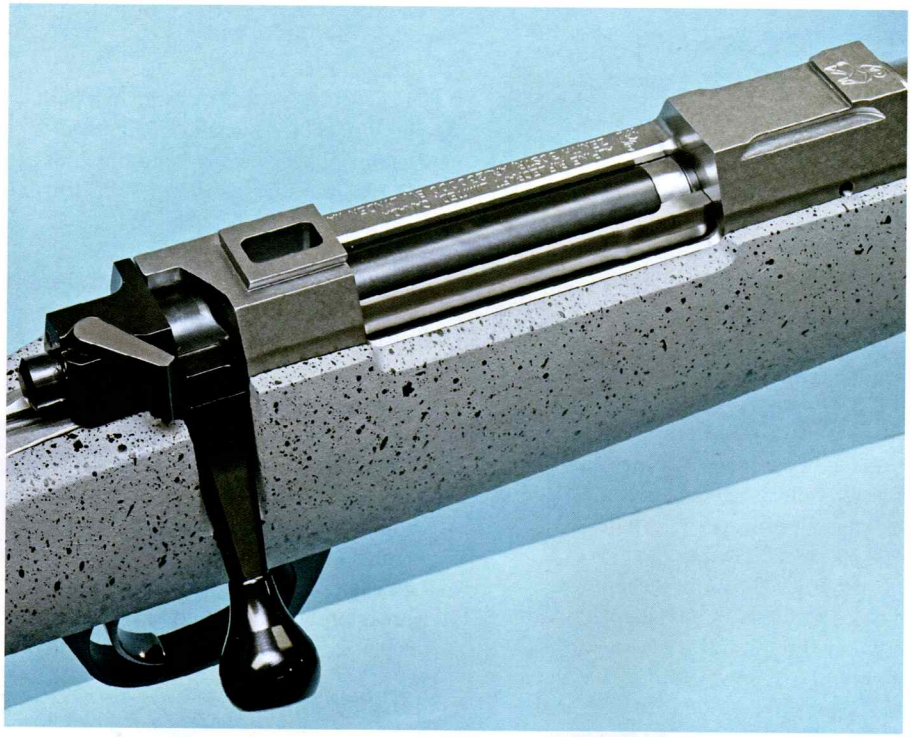
A controlled round feed system is used, pulling cartridges from a blind box magazine with a typical capacity of four cartridges. The bolt is a two-lug design, with the safety a three-position wing type that reliably blocks the firing pin not just the TriggerTech trigger.

The stock is Mike's design and built by Wildcat Composites of Alberta, using both carbon fibre and fibreglass. Barrels are sourced from IBI in British Columbia, with the rifle I tested equipped with one of their excellent carbon fibre wrapped tubes. That barrel is equipped with a four-port, side-discharge muzzle brake, which is timed using a T-60 Torx recess at the muzzle, producing a distinctly modern look.

I'm told the rifle's content is 99% Canadian, with only a few of the smallest parts sourced from the US, and the recoil pad coming from Italy. Of course, there's a market for high-quality rifles beyond Canada, and so these rifles are approved for import into the USA with several on the way there already.

Trigger Time

Naturally, after giving it a thorough examination, spending some trigger time with a new rifle is always the next step. And since this one is chambered in 6.5 Creedmoor, scrounging up some quality ammo was easy. Factory offerings from Hornady, Norma and Lapua as well as one handload rounded out what I ended up with. Testing followed my usual pattern for hunting rifles which dictates five 3-shot groups for a total of 15 rounds, letting the barrel cool completely between



"All rifles ship with rings that use a mounting system machined into the action and unique to Alpine Riflecraft."

AMMO	VELOCITY	S.D.	AVG. GROUP SIZE
Hornady 100gr ELD-VT	3073 fps	21	0.59 MOA
Norma 140gr TIPSTRIKE	2592 fps	20	0.67 MOA
Norma 140gr Whitetail	2603 fps	16	0.87 MOA
Norma 143gr BONDSTRIKE	2676 fps	19	0.70 MOA
Lapua 123gr Open Tip Match	2776 fps	20	0.74 MOA
Lapua 136gr Open Tip Match	2752 fps	17	0.47 MOA
Handload: Hornady 143gr ELD-X H4350 powder, CCI BR2 primer	2585 fps	19	0.56 MOA

groups, then reporting the average group size in MOA (minute of angle). In this case, this was enough shooting (105 rounds) that's it's easiest to put the results in a table.

Obviously, the results show this rifle can produce remarkable precision and consistency when fed quality ammo. It simply shot everything extremely well. Additionally, I was surprised at how consistent the point of impact was across the seven various loadings, with no bullet type grouping more than two inches from my point of aim at 100 metres, even though there's a 43-grain spread in bullet weight.

For hunters wanting to squeeze every bit of precision from a rifle by tweaking handloads or experimenting with factory ammo, a rifle like this will take a lot of shooting to find a clear winner. On the other hand, if any good bullet that groups around half-MOA is enough, picking a load will be easy.

Choosing from the list of factory-loaded products I tried; a coyote/varmint load would undoubtedly be Hornady's 100-grain ELD-VT. And yes, that's what I used on the coyote mentioned earlier. For banging steel at the range or impressing my friends, Lapua's 136-grain OTM would get my vote. Then, for chasing big game I'd go with Norma's 143-grain BONDSTRIKE, a bonded bullet with a high B.C. that should give excellent terminal performance. And, of course, there are even more handload options beyond the one listed here.

Handling

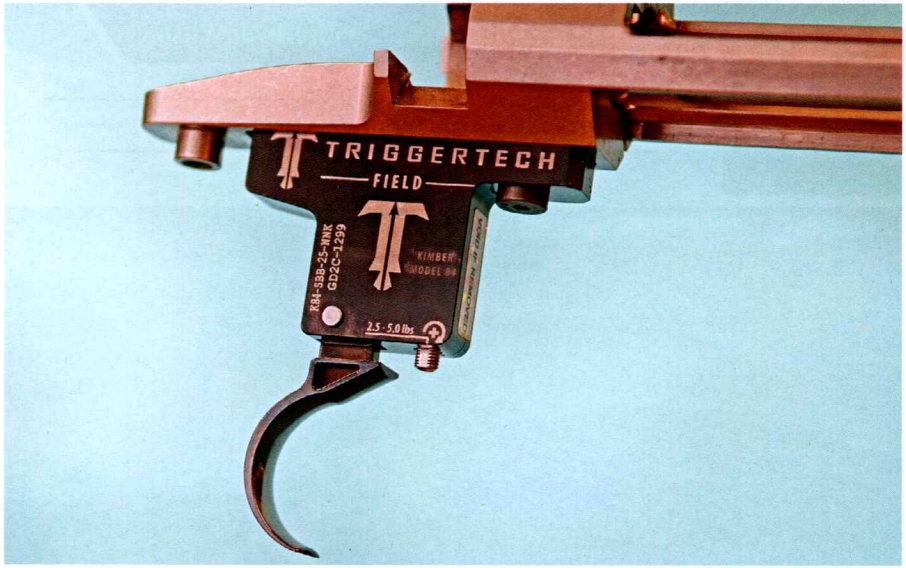
As expected, this fully custom rifle operates smoothly, handles well, and does it while looking great. The stock finish has just enough texture to provide a solid grip and the rifle balances well with the midpoint being right on the recoil lug when the Zeiss Conquest 4-16x44 scope I used is mounted. Controlled round feeding is reliable whether operating the bolt slowly or quickly. I also noted the rifle feeds easily when a lone round is dropped loose into the otherwise empty action and the bolt closed.

The TriggerTech trigger works perfectly, just as expected and the safety is intuitive. That unusual muzzle brake does an effective job of mitigating recoil, and the thick recoil pad soaks up whatever is left, making the rifle comfortable to shoot.

Cocking is easier than expected thanks to the roller-bearing equipped cocking piece. And ejection is a handloader's friend because it's manually controlled, meaning a hard bolt return tosses the empty case well clear, while gentle bolt operation leaves the empty in the action ready to be picked out and saved.

The custom sling mounts are a nice touch, while the addition of a Spartan bipod adapter built into the forend is an elegant way to attach that firm's lightweight support systems. The rifle even comes with a plug that fills the "hole" of this adapter, when bipod use isn't anticipated.

"Controlled round feeding is reliable whether operating the bolt slowly or quickly."



"The TriggerTech trigger works perfectly, just as we've come to expect from all TriggerTech products."

Overall, the rifle's capacity for precision, the evident workmanship and all the attention to details that make a rifle owner's life easier mean this firearm oozes confidence in making a shot. Of course, that kind of performance costs money, a lot of money, so it's not in the budget for most hunters, me included. If you think you could own one, visit their website at alpineriflecraft.ca and work your way through their online rifle builder. Then if you agree with Mike that it's the perfect mountain rifle, pull out your credit card. ■