



Grant LeQuieu shot this photo of Marc and Thomas LeQuieu with the black powder kill.

Blackpowder antelope

'A MORE TRADITIONAL WAY OF DOING BUSINESS'

Story by Marc LeQuieu for the Blue Mountain Eagle

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hen I was a young man, my father sold real estate, and every now and then, brother and I would get selected to clean up a house that was to be listed.

On one such occasion, I stumbled upon a Thompson Center .45-caliber Hawken rifle that had not been put together. Building that little muzzle

loader solidified my intrigue with black powder and lead.

Today, I have graduated to the much larger .54-caliber front loaders for hunting, and with the ever-increasing popularity of the outdoor sports, hunting with a muzzleloader is a very good way to challenge oneself in the game fields of North America.

I have been fortunate enough to take both deer and elk with black powder and really found my species of choice for the traditional weapons in the American antelope.

Hunting antelope, of all things, with a smoke pole is probably not

the first choice of animals for the limited range of black powder rifles.

I will say that elk or bear are a bit easier to handle with black powder, but with antelope in Oregon at least, you can usually draw a muzzleloader tag inside of four years instead of waiting as many as 10-15 years for a tag with a centerfire rifle.

I know antelope do not require the huge bore diameter of the .54s, but that caliber has been with me for a very long time, and I find it accurate, forgiving and capable of downing any animal hit very quickly.

For those of you who hunt antelope in September here in Oregon, you know that long tracking jobs in 100 degree heat is not the most entertaining way to spend an afternoon.

With the interest in more outdoor adventure sports, and with resurgence in traditional equipment, hunting with black powder is truly a very satisfying way to pursue game, and with practice, confident hits on milk jugs at 100 yards are easy to achieve.

The other benefit of black powder is the ease of selecting light loads for youth and women hunters.

I shoot 75 grains of FFF Triple Seven powder measured by weight, not volume, and my wife and youngest boy shoot only 60 grains of the same powder. We shoot the same 325 grain cast lead bullet, but their load of 60 grains does not produce the snappy recoil of the heavier charge.

Not only that, but I started all my family off shooting round balls, which are only about 200 grains or so and, thus, were a much softer, yet very accurate, load to build confidence with.

In today's world of long-range and high-powered super magnums, don't forget the opportunities to enrich oneself by looking back through time and connecting with a more traditional way of doing business.

Take a look at the muzzleloader-only hunts next time you pick up a big game regulation catalogue or go and talk to your local wildlife office. The opportunities for expanding your own and your family's horizons may truly surprise you.

Marc LeQuieu is a veteran, a former wildland firefighter and African hunter turned gunsmith.