



HOT STUFF

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THIS BSA METEOR EVO SILENTIUM WORTH £185

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RIFLE REVIEW

ALPHA WOLF

Daystate's Wolfpack gets a high-tech new leader



BLOWBACK RIFLE REVIEW

AN AK? OK!

Crosman's AK-1 put through its paces



PEST CONTROL

OWL OF APPROVAL

How a small decoy can yield big results

FUTURE
ISSUE 161

KIT ROUND-UP

IT'S IN THE BAG!

Four packs to help lighten your load



KEY SPECS



MAKER: Daystate, England
(daystate.com)

MODEL: Alpha Wolf

PRICE: Sub-12 £2,300, High Power
(tested) £2,500

TYPE: Programmable
electronic bullpup

CALIBRE: .177, .22 (tested), .25 and
.30 (.25 and .30 FAC only)

OVERALL LENGTH: 836mm (with
long barrel)

LENGTH OF PULL: 365mm

BARREL LENGTH: 17in and
23in (tested)

WEIGHT: 3.9kg (model tested
without scope)

TRIGGER: Two-stage
adjustable electronic

POWER: Sub-12 and high-power
up to 95 ft-lb

RIFLE TEST LEADER OF THE PACK

Mat Manning lifts the lid on the Daystate Alpha Wolf – the new head of Daystate's family of electronic superguns

Daystate refuses to stand still when it comes to pushing the boundaries of airgun design. The British gunmaker set a new standard for adjustability when it launched the electronically tunable Delta Wolf two years ago. Resting on its laurels has never been a trait of this airgun giant, and further advances on the theme were inevitable. Those advances have now been unveiled in the shape of the Alpha Wolf – the latest addition to Daystate's hi-tech digital pack.

TAKING STOCK

Before we delve into the Alpha Wolf's electronic wizardry, let's run through its exterior form and aesthetics, many features of which are just as impressive as its digital internals.

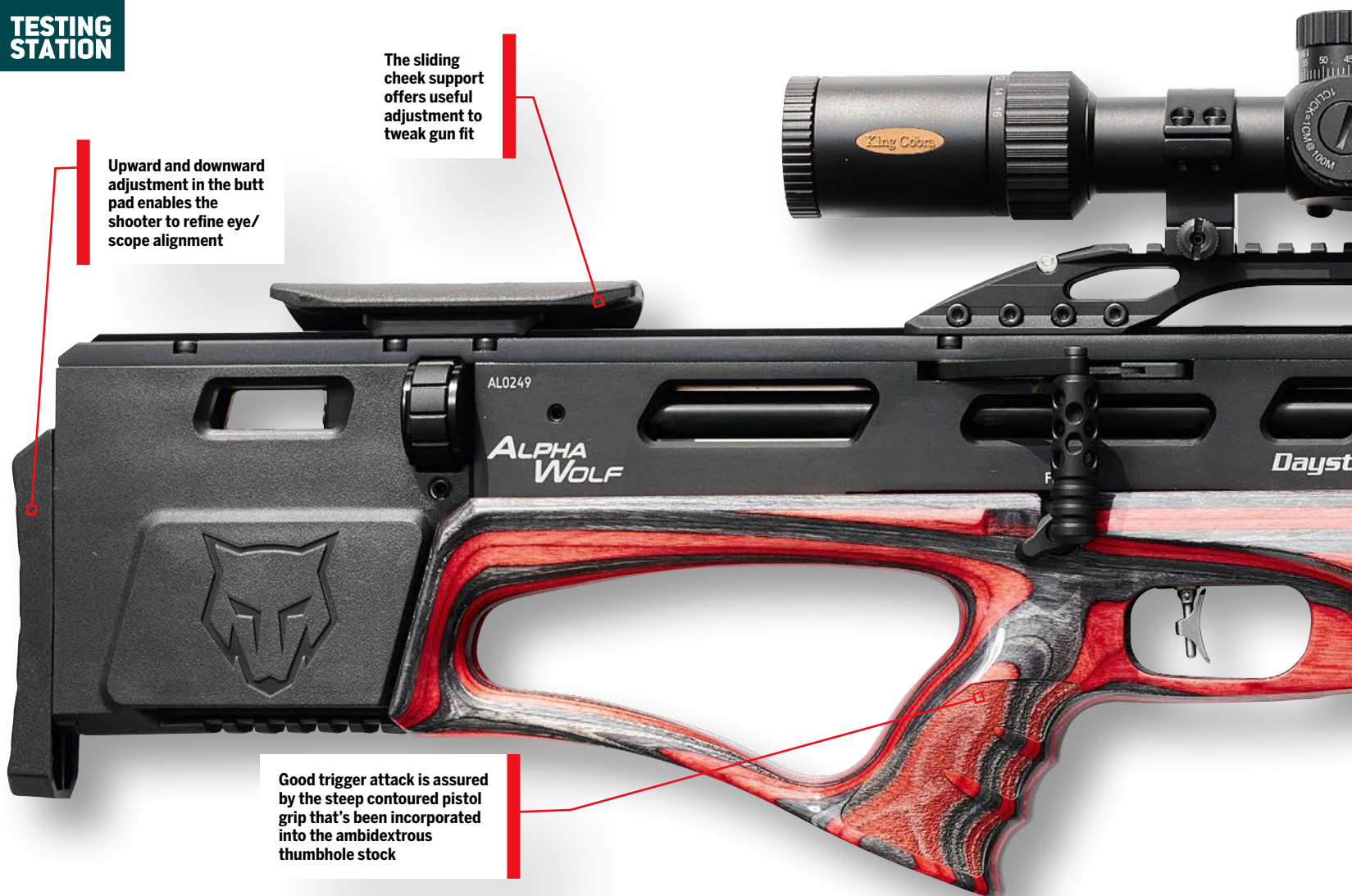
One criticism levelled at the Delta Wolf (unfairly in my opinion, as you can only go so far with tactical styling) was that it didn't look very different from other bullpup offerings. That most certainly is not the case with the Alpha Wolf, which is a real head-turner.

Rather than going dark and moody with the Alpha Wolf, Daystate has chosen a look-at-me glossy red and grey laminate thumbhole, in tones reminiscent of the Rosso variant of their awesome Red Wolf.

It may not be to everyone's taste, but even if you don't like it you can't help but stare. This is a gun that demands attention, even before you get a taste of its remarkable performance. For those of you who like something more subdued, I wouldn't be surprised if a toned-down option were to follow fairly soon.

Apart from giving aesthetics a different twist, the laminate section of the stock also serves as a very comfortable ambidextrous handle.

The generous thumbhole cutaway leads into a steep, chunky and nicely sculpted pistol grip, which gives excellent trigger attack and features crisp stippling on both sides. The underside of the forend sweeps sufficiently far forward that I didn't find myself having to grab the bottle with my leading hand. It is also handily equipped with a 75mm Picatinny accessory rail for a bipod.



Upward and downward adjustment in the butt pad enables the shooter to refine eye/scope alignment

The sliding cheek support offers useful adjustment to tweak gun fit

Good trigger attack is assured by the steep contoured pistol grip that's been incorporated into the ambidextrous thumbhole stock

Design is simpler on the rear section of the stock, and will look very familiar to Delta Wolf owners. The cheekpiece sits on a dovetail rail that runs the entire length of the top section. Its curved profile makes for a comfortable contact point, and it can be adjusted forwards and backwards, or reversed for left-handers.

The butt is adorned with a 60mm Picatinny rail. Although fairly basic in terms of fit, the pad is height adjustable. I would have appreciated more adjustment than what is offered on the standard setup, but you can swap it out for a PRS butt if you want a more bespoke fit.

Overall length of the .22 calibre FAC-rated review gun, which was equipped with a 23-inch barrel, was 3.9kg unscoped. At just under 84cm long, it is very compact and, with an MTC King Cobra 4-16x50 F1 scope fitted, the point of balance fell about 30mm in front of the trigger blade, which felt fine to me.

The Alpha Wolf has a quick-change barrel system, enabling owners to swap between different calibres and barrel lengths – the sub-12 ft-lb model is supplied with a 17-inch barrel.

Those changes will obviously cause fluctuations in overall length and weight.

FEATURES AND FUNCTION

Clever features are abundant on the Alpha Wolf. None of them are gimmicks and all are there to enhance the shooting experience. As previously mentioned, the cheekpiece sits on a dovetail rail.

Also attached to that same 500mm rail is a forward-swept Picatinny scope rail. Slacken off the bolts that fasten it, and the scope rail slides backwards and forwards, enabling you to achieve perfect eye relief no matter which scope you prefer to shoot with.

The mount does sit quite high, and the centre of my scope tube was around 80mm higher than the bore of the barrel by the time I had factored in mounts to get the scope to a height that gave good eye alignment. This niggle is a standard problem with bullpup design; it accentuates the need to apply holdover at close range and can increase problems caused by canting the gun.



Although the chunky shroud provides some sound suppression, it is threaded for attachment of an additional silencer

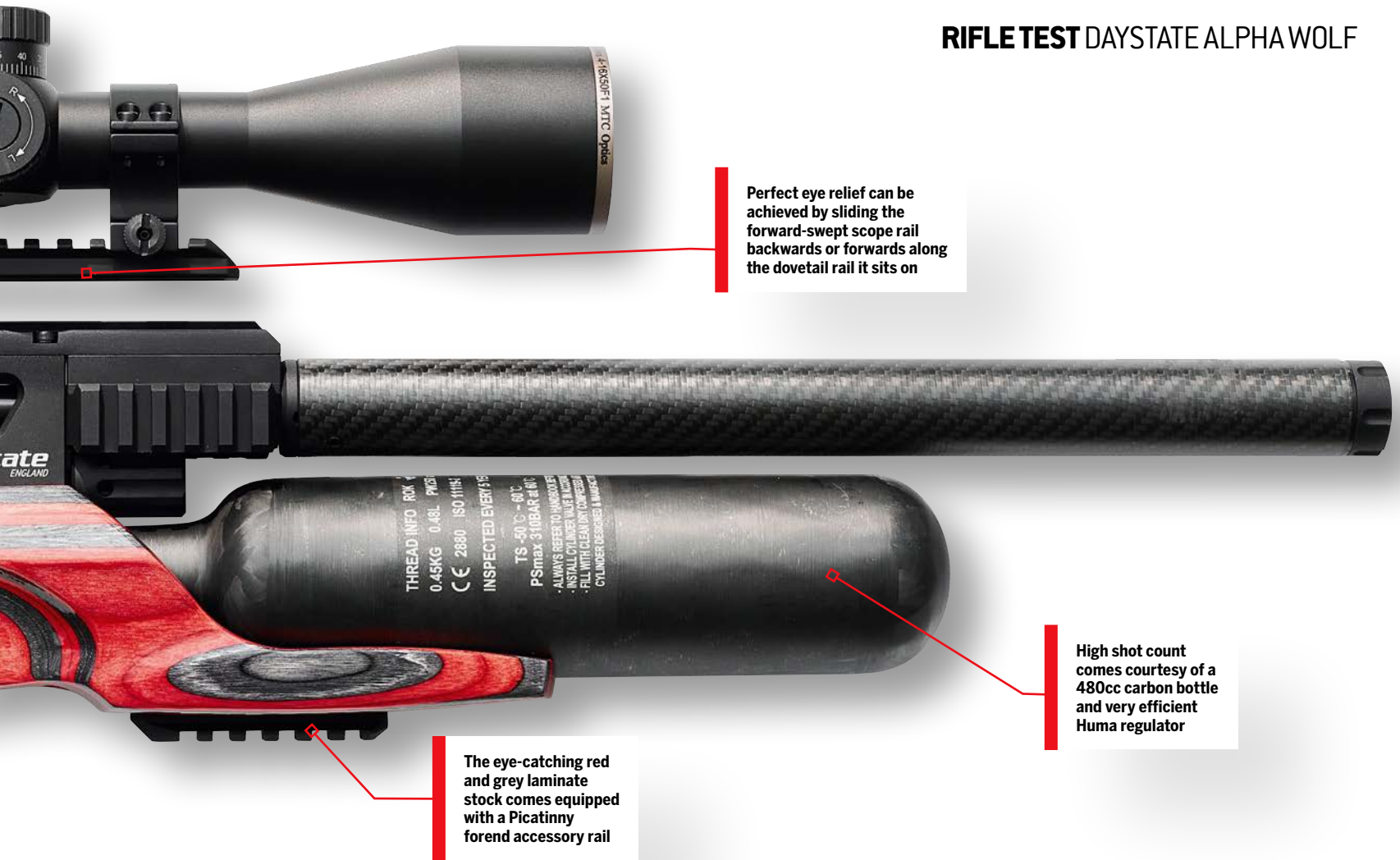
However, the boffins at Daystate have incorporated a spirit level into the rail – check that the bubble is central and you know the gun is dead upright and the line of sight and the pellet's flightpath perfectly aligned.

True to bullpup form, the barrel runs almost the entire length of the gun, and its forward section sits inside a chunky carbon shroud. The shroud looks good and provides some sound suppression, although it is equipped with a ½" UNF thread for attachment of an additional moderator if you want to really mute the muzzle report.

Daystate barrels are very accurate. Their Extreme Benchrest results attest to that, as does the pellet-on-pellet performance of the Red Wolf that has become one of my go-to hunting airguns.

Apart from being very good at sending pellets into the bullseye, the ART barrel on the Alpha Wolf can be changed quickly and easily. Owners have the ability to swap between .177, .22, .25 and .30 calibres without fancy tools or the help of a gunsmith.

The barrel is held securely in place by an Allen screw at its rear – slacken that off and it pulls straight out.



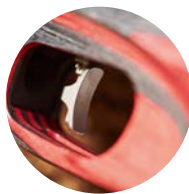
“DAYSTATE’S ELECTRONIC TRIGGERS HAVE EVOLVED INTO SOMETHING GREAT”

With the barrel out, swap the pellet probe for one that corresponds with the calibre you are changing to.

Slide the butt plate out by pushing forward its retaining button in the underside of the butt section, then use an Allen key to flip the battery out so you can access the screw at the rear of the probe and take it out. Replace with the correct probe, tighten the screw, push the battery back in, snap back the butt plate and you’re ready to slide the barrel in.

Terminals at the rear of the barrel shroud need to line up with the ones on the gun to connect the onboard chronograph to the gun’s electronic brain. Tighten up the barrel screw and you’re all set with a new calibre. The switch took me a couple of minutes.

The Alpha Wolf runs Daystate’s super-reliable gate-loading, self-indexing magazine, which holds 13 shots in .177 calibre, 11 in .22, 10 in .25 and eight in .30.



Daystate’s rather famous electronic triggers offer lots of adjustment – for blade position and first and second stage refinement in the Alpha Wolf’s case

This gun shares the Delta Wolf’s tandem mag system which can double the number of available shots by holding two magazines at once – empty the first one and you can push the full one across and start probing pellets straight from it.

Magazines can be inserted from either side, or from both sides if you buy an extra one to use the double loading system.

That pellet-friendly magazine is driven by an excellent sidelever action. Situated just above the pistol grip, the lever is well-positioned and can be swapped over for left-handers, making the Alpha Wolf truly ambidextrous, save for its touchscreen. The lever is adorned with a large dropdown handle, the operation of which quickly becomes a subconscious action.

One area of high-end airgun design that I believe should show no sign of compromise is the trigger setup. The two-stage electronic unit on this airgun is excellent, and it boasts loads of adjustment.

The match-style blade has adjustment for length of pull, height and angle.

In terms of let-off, you can tweak first stage weight and travel and second stage weight. Daystate’s electronic triggers were good at the outset, and have evolved into something great, enabling you to achieve a remarkably clean and predictable trigger break that far surpasses the bullpup standard.

An AR-type safety catch is conveniently positioned above and behind the trigger blade, with switches on either side of the gun to maintain that ambidextrous operation. It is safe when the switch is in the upward position, and you thumb it down when you’re ready to shoot. It turns on and off with a positive click, which is quiet enough not to cause problems for hunters.

ELECTRONIC TUNABILITY

As on the Delta Wolf, the Alpha has a touchscreen on the left-hand side of the butt stock. In normal use it shows regulator pressure and your chosen mode setting, along with calibre and pellet choice, barrel length, selected muzzle velocity, battery level, required regulator pressure and how many pellets you have left in the magazine. ➔

Thanks to the chronograph located inside the carbon barrel shroud, muzzle velocity is displayed in feet per second every time you take a shot.

Unload, remove the magazine and point the gun in a safe direction, and you can make adjustments to the electronic settings after unlocking the menu by switching on the safety catch, opening the sidelever and then holding the trigger in for three seconds. Swipe to the left and you scroll to Factory Shot Setting.

Tap the screen and you then enter menus to input your chosen calibre, barrel length, pellet weight and muzzle velocity. In this mode, all the complicated work has been done for you: stored profiles devised by Daystate's research and development team ensure optimum performance at the settings you choose.

You may need to adjust regulator pressure to get the most from the preset profiles. The screen will tell you the figure you need to aim for, and you don't even need an Allen key to make the adjustment as the job is done by turning the knob between the barrel and the neck of the air bottle.

You turn it anti-clockwise to increase regulator pressure and clockwise to decrease it. Pressure can be wound up with the bottle in situ, but it needs to be disconnected and the gun dry-fired to clear any remaining air to avoid damage when reducing it.

Further menus enable you to set magazine shot count, switch between day and night display modes, adjust auto-power-off time, switch the chrono on and off, and change the orientation of the screen.

And if you want to take a deep dive into the Alpha Wolf's electronic tuning potential, swipe past Factory Shot Setting and choose Advanced Shot Setting. Now you can set up your own profiles, adjusting voltage and hammer pulse length.

Your individual profiles can be saved and you can switch between them as you change ammo, calibres or regulator pressure to achieve exactly the performance you want. Shooters who like to spend their weekends sitting at a bench in pursuit of minuscule groups at 100m and beyond should find this extreme tunability very helpful in their quest for the perfect setup.

The ability to fettle the Alpha Wolf's performance doesn't end there.

A pellet-friendly gate-loading magazine makes for fast and effective reloading of the Alpha Wolf



Daystate's Digital Transfer Device (TDT), available as an extra for £120, enables you to connect your computer to the gun and then check and update firmware, create profile tables, calibrate the pressure sensor and chronograph, as well as a whole raft of other options.

The Alpha Wolf runs the latest version of Daystate's firmware, which has had around 30 tweaks. Delta Wolf owners needn't feel left out though, as they can download it with the TDT. Or they can go the whole hog and buy the Alpha Stock Kit, which includes the new stock, scope rail and TDT, for £300.

Shooters who go for the sub-12 option won't have access to the same array of tunability – because it would result in an airgun that requires a Firearm Certificate.



The main screen displays details of your chosen shooting profile, along with information including muzzle velocity when you have the on board chronograph switched on

They are, however, able to increase and decrease muzzle velocity in two and three percent increments, within the legally permitted maximum power output, of course, which is a heck of a lot more tweaking than you can do with the output of other legal-limit airguns.

POWER AND PERFORMANCE

Being able to make so many changes to the Alpha Wolf's performance does make shot count hard to pin down.

The 480cc carbon bottle and Huma regulator make it a very efficient operator though, and you can expect around 50 shots at 60 ft-lb and 500 at sub-12 from a full 250 bar maximum fill.

Pressure in the main bottle is displayed on a gauge just in front of the trigger on the left-hand side of the stock, and filling is via an inlet accessed from the underside of the stock beneath the gauge.

Battery charging is by means of a supplied USB lead, which plugs in at the rear of the thumbhole cutaway.

“SET UP YOUR OWN PROFILES, ADJUSTING VOLTAGE AND HAMMER PULSE LENGTH”



The Alpha Wolf's slick sidelever action with large dropdown handle ensures smooth, intuitive reloading



The easy-access knob above the neck of the bottle makes for tool-free adjustment of regulator pressure



A supplied USB lead plugs into the rear of the thumbhole cutaway for easy battery charging

Runtime depends on many factors, including how long you set the auto shutdown time at, but I have put more than 1,000 shots through the test gun without recharging.

The FAC version of the Alpha Wolf has the potential for huge power output. In .22 calibre and feeding it 33.95-grain JSB Jumbo Beast pellets, I had this remarkable airgun churning out around 70 ft-lb when really pushing it, and I understand that 95 ft-lb is currently possible in .30 calibre.

Of course, that sort of power comes with downsides including exaggerated muzzle flip, increased air consumption and a muzzle crack that will certainly need taming with a decent silencer. Use this airgun's tunability wisely though, and you can strike a remarkable balance between raw power and smooth refinement.

Switching over to 25.38-grain Daystate Rangemaster King ammo and running them at 880 feet per second for about 43 ft-lb, the Alpha Wolf was a dream to shoot.

Shooting from a bench, it was virtually pellet on pellet at 30m and ragged thumbnail groups were the norm at 60m – and that was with pellets straight from the tin after a very quick setup. Lock time feels fast and the trigger is sublime, and those two factors help to keep human error to a minimum.

The Alpha Wolf's electronic brain is endowed with Advanced Velocity Technology, which makes constant adjustments that combine with the Huma regulator to give remarkable consistency. Running the Rangemaster Kings at that high power level, shot-to-shot consistency over a string of 10 shots fell well within 10fps. That is impressive at such a high output, and I would expect the variation to be tiny on sub-12 models.

Of course, the pinnacle of performance doesn't come cheap, and the Alpha Wolf retails at £2,300 in its sub-12 guise and £2,500 for the high-power version. That is serious money, but as I have said many times before, you have to expect to pay top whack if you want the very latest in technical development.

Too many shooters demand the perfect gun when they see a high price tag, but the perfect airgun does not exist and never will.

The Daystate Alpha Wolf is, however, an excellent airgun; a head-turning piece of specialist equipment which delivers a remarkable degree of tunability and adaptability without being too complicated, and I am sure plenty of shooters will find it to be as close as they can get to their perfect airgun. ●



Equipped with the latest version of Daystate's digital firmware, the Alpha Wolf offers a huge amount of control over power output

THE AIRGUN SHOOTER VERDICT

"Daystate has once again set a new standard for airgun advancement. The Alpha Wolf boasts looks, technology and performance that make it more than worthy of supergun status"