

## UP-CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH

**B**ritish airgunners won't automatically think of Turkey as a prolific manufacturer of airguns, but you've only got to look at the latest brochure from the Hatsan Arms Company to realise that, in fact, this well known shotgun-producing nation is also becoming a force to be reckoned with on the air-powered front (British gunmakers, take note).

Based in the up-and-coming city – Turkey's third-largest – of Izmir, near the Aegean Sea, Hatsan are the biggest shooting name in their part of the globe and their substantial range of airgun products come into the UK courtesy of shooting distribution giants, Edgar Brothers.

Don't think because Hatsan is based 'somewhere in the East' they'll be lacking in technology; you couldn't be more wrong. Their factory not only deploys the latest, state-of-the-art tooling but also a highly-skilled workforce that even the likes of Webley have deemed worth investing in.

Indeed, their current spring-powered model line-up easily proves Hatsan are well-qualified as a contemporary

airgun manufacturer. New for 2008 are springers that reach 1,250 feet per second (the FAC-rated Torpedo underlever) and a multitude of models with radical stocks that incorporate the latest in advanced polymers, including cammo and *faux* wood finishes.

But for airgun shooters, the best news of all is that Hatsan have now turned their attentions to precharged power – and the AT44-10 you exclusively see here is their inaugural model that's in UK gun shops now.

Although it's also available with a sporter stock and in single-shot guise, Edgar Brothers tell me that, by virtue of the fact that it doesn't cost much more, 98 per cent of orders have been for the 10-shot, thumbhole version shown here.

With its all-black and 'heavy look', your initial impression might be that the AT44-10 isn't as refined as some PCPs. But on the contrary, this rifle shouldn't be dismissed from any field shooter's short-list – particularly as it costs just £450, a highly competitive price in today's precharged marketplace.

It's light and well balanced in the shoulder, available in either .177 or .22 and boasts a plethora of features that all stack up to make the Hatsan AT44-10 full of Eastern promise and a tasty Turkish delight. Let's see why...

**NIGEL ALLEN assesses the down-range performance of the HATSAN AT44-10 on page 33**

### PLUG-IN CHARGING



**THE AT44's** charging system couldn't be easier. With the supplied probe connected to the hose assembly of either your diver's bottle or stirrup pump, you simply push it in and fill up to the required air pressure (190 BAR), as indicated on the gauge at the end of the cylinder. What's more, you can also unscrew the entire cylinder from the action – handy if you want to invest in a 'spare'.



### ADJUSTABLE TWO-STAGE TRIGGER

**TASTEFULLY FINISHED** in a contrasting gold anodising, the Hatsan's curved blade adds a touch of class – in look and feel. Two cross-head screws, one forward and one behind the blade allow you to customise both first and second stages. The pull pressure screw is positioned deep inside the mechanism, so you'll need to remove the trigger guard to access it – but that adjustment really only needs to be made the once. The travel length of the first stage is made *in-situ* courtesy of the guard's forward access hole.



# Benchmark

## THE HATSAN AT44-10

### MULTI-SHOT CAPACITY



**MULTI-SHOT PCPs** are a firm favourite in the hunting fraternity. Not only do you get easy, fumble-free loading – great when you're lamping or shooting with gloves on – but you've also got the opportunity for a quick back-up shot if it's needed.

The AT44-10 runs a removable, mech-free rotary magazine that's indexed via the rifle's action, rather than its own, integral system. This means there's less likelihood of a jam-up due to grit getting in the works. Each of the 10 chambers automatically index into line with the breech on the rearward cock of the sidelever and, on the lever's return, the feed probe seats the pellet into the rifled breech.

The magazine is kept in place in the breech courtesy of a spring-tensioned brass pin. To remove a 'spent' mag, you simply push forward the brass bolt on the right of the breech, forward of the magazine, and your empty automatically ejects into your waiting palm.

### EASY SIDELEVER COCKING SYSTEM

**ONCE, THE** only sporting PCP to carry a sidelever cocking system was the Weihrauch HW100 – but now it seems this is very much the in-vogue method, with the Air Arms S510-SL recently following suit... and now the Hatsan.

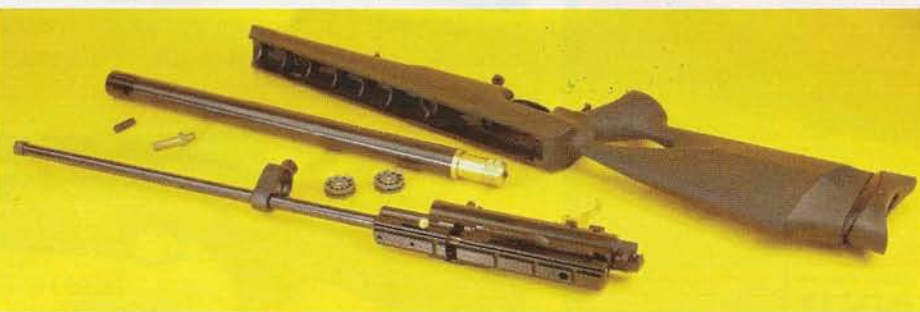
Tweak out the 10 cm long sidelever from its 'snap-shut' position and it springs open to about 80 degrees – and you only need pull it back another 15 degrees to fully arm the rifle, index the mag and set the auto magazine. There's no effort or noise.



### PRACTICAL STOCK AND ACTION

**THE AT44-10** gives field shooters every conceivable advantage. Not only does the well-designed polymer stock keep the rifle's overall weight down to a tad over three kilos, it's weatherproof, anti-glare and 'grippy', and comes with a height-adjustable butt pad.

The action has plenty of plus-points, too – a free-floating barrel, long scope ramp for both 11 and 22 mm dovetails and the option to remove the entire air cylinder if you'd rather carry a spare than lug around a cumbersome diver's tank.



# The Hatsan AT44-10 ...on the Firing Line

I love getting 'all-new' rifles to test – that is to say those which aren't updates or re-vamps of existing models. There's just so much to discover, even to someone like me who's probably test fired more 'new' air rifles than he's had hot dinners. And while I'm quite familiar with many of Hatsan's spring-powered models, being their inaugural precharged pneumatic, I was really relishing the opportunity to take the Turkish-built AT44-10 onto the test ranges. It certainly looked full of Eastern Promise.

So excited by the prospect of what this 'pneu' rifle had to offer – and eager to take full advantage of a rare break in the windy weather we were having this summer – I decided to forego the initial velocity tests and take the AT44-10 straight out onto the test ranges.

While I rigged up my Webley 3-9 x 40 Sapphire scope using mounts with a standard airgun clamping width of 11 mm, I could have just as easily fitted a telly from one of my firearms. That's because Hatsan have ingeniously machined their breech with not one, but *two* dovetail widths to also cater for 22 mm scope mounts.

Unscoped, the balance of the AT44-10 is well forward, courtesy of its hollow, polymer stock – and with the Webley bolted on, the combo's balance became extremely shooter friendly and ideal for long-range work, where a front-biased feel really comes into its own.

However, my initial results on paper were disappointing and any thoughts I had about using the rifle in the field were blown out of the water. Despite the excellent control afforded by the very well designed stock – which I'd even set to fit me perfectly courtesy of the height-adjustable butt pad – I



Hatsan provide a push-in protective plug to stop grit getting into the works, but I found it awkward to use



Hatsan have engineered the AT44-10 with two widths of dovetail grooves to accommodate 22mm mounts



Cocking levers seem to be all the rage at the moment because of the mechanical advantage a lever gives over a bolt-action

hadn't put in a decent group by the time the cylinder was in need of a fill-up. The trigger felt good, the ammo was a good brand, I knew the scope was reliable, so *why* couldn't I get any decent results at the target?

Baffled, I returned to the workshop and did what I should have done in the first place – checked the rifle's consistency over the chrono.

Filling the AT44 to Hatsan's recommended 190 BAR air pressure requires nothing more than plugging in the brass probe, keeping an eye on its integral air gauge, located at the end of the air cylinder and un-plugging when you're done.

Hatsan provide a push-in protective plug to stop grit getting into the works, but I

found it awkward to use as the barrel interfered with one side of the probe hole, so I wasn't able to push the plug out of the other side.

My Skan chrono showed one fill-up gave 53 usable shots. While I was impressed with the overall spread of just 15 feet per second (0.6 ft. lb.), I must admit being surprised by the low shot-count and the fact that the re-fill pressure was around 135 BAR. There were more shots to be had below this – about 15 if I took the rifle down to 120 BAR – but I felt the velocity spread was then too wide to equate to an accurate down-range performance.

Impressively, the high/low spread my chronoscope recorded for each 10-shot magazine was always in single figures, so I know consistency wasn't at the heart of the accuracy issue.

I then looked at the shot-feed. Sometimes the magazine chambers on multi-shot rifles don't line up correctly with the breech, resulting in one edge of the pellet being shaved when it gets pushed into the rifling.

But close inspection showed such a tight tolerance of the very well-engineered magazine indexing system that I couldn't see this as causing the problem on the Hatsan. With consistency and pellet feed both A1, this really only left two things that could be the root of my inaccuracy problem – barrel and/or pellet compatibility.

Hatsan make their own barrels – and they're good. I know this because I called up a few of my gunmaker contacts and they all confirmed what I suspected: the rifled bore of the AT44 was unlikely to be the problem.

So that left the ammo – and with the rifle re-filled and ready to go, I returned to the test ranges armed with nearly a dozen brands of pellets and plenty of paper targets.

The first two brands I tried were awful, spraying pellets all over the target, no two touching. Then... success! I started sticking in 'one-holers'. The next brand went haywire...and the next... then another result. And so it went on, some brands doing the business, others not delivering the goods.

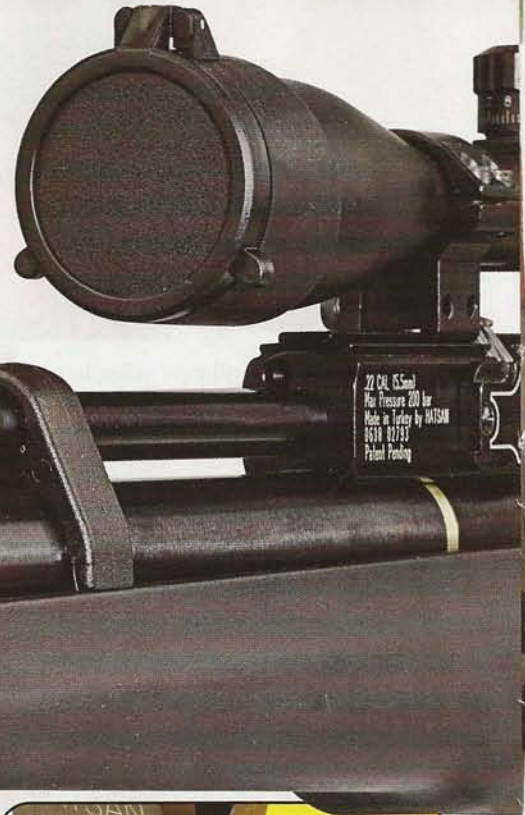
During this protracted test period, it suddenly dawned on me that the rifle was performing – rather well, actually – with the pellet brands that were 'narrower', and

a bit more investigation showed that I didn't need a micrometer to tell which were which. The pellet brands most likely *not* to group were those that didn't go into the magazine very easily. I'd proved that the accuracy of the AT44-10 depends entirely on how well you load up its magazine (see panel opposite).

With the correct load, however, the down-range performance of the Hatsan was extremely worthy of its price tag. Like all rifles, the AT44-10 had its favourite ammo diet. For the record, I got the best accuracy results from 15.9-grain Air



The ten-shot magazine springs out of the breech when you move the brass bolt, which makes loading and unloading very easy



The air reservoir can be bled by use of this valve – should you want to do so



Hunters will like that the auto-safety catch can be easily re-set. The red dot shows that the rifle is ready to fire

Arms Field, 15.85-grain Daystate FT (which both averaged 570 f.p.s.) and 21.45-grain Bisley Magnum (av. 495 f.p.s.).

Accuracy fears allayed, I turned my attentions to the Hatsan's other features and, once I was consistently achieving sub-inch groups at 30 metres, first stop was the trigger. Having set the length of the first stage on the rifle – you access the adjustment screw through a hole in the trigger guard – I decided to reduce the let-off pressure of the second stage to take full advantage of the rifle's inherent potential.

This meant undoing both screws in the fore-end and the one at the rear of the trigger guard in order to split stock and action and gain access to the pressure adjustment screw behind the gold-anodised trigger blade. Following the instruction manual to the letter, I soon had the pull-weight down to around a kilo (2-ish lbs.) and, with component parts back together, this enabled me to extend my effective range a good 10 metres.

In the field, the AT44-10 certainly gives you every conceivable practical advantage.

Besides keeping the weight down, its polymer stock has been designed with a good mix of target and sporting features – and it's ambidextrous too. The thumbhole gives you all the trigger control you could wish for, no matter what the shooting angle, and the slanted cheek-piece and adjustable, curved butt pad ensure a tailor-made gunfit, bringing your eye into perfect alignment with the scope and the gun nicely 'on point' into your shoulder.

## AT44-10 FACTS

<b>MANUFACTURER:</b> Hatsan Arms, Izmir, Turkey.	<b>FILL PRESSURE:</b> 190 BAR (2,755 p.s.i.).	<b>STOCK:</b> Advanced polymer thumbhole with height-adjustable butt pad.
<b>UK IMPORTER:</b> Edgar Bros., Cheshire.	<b>SHOTS PER CHARGE:</b> (Carbine) .177 – 40 (importer's figure); .22 – 53 (tested).	<b>LENGTH OF PULL:</b> 360 mm. (14.1 ins.).
<b>CONTACT:</b> ☎ 01625 660672.	<b>OVERALL LENGTH:</b> 1,000 mm. (39.4 ins.).	<b>SIGHTS:</b> N/A. NB: Breech carries dovetails for both airgun- and firearm-width scope mounts.
<b>TYPE:</b> Multi-shot sporter.	<b>BARREL LENGTH:</b> 495 mm. (19.4 ins.).	<b>POWER:</b> 11+ ft. lbs. (15+ J)..
<b>ACTION:</b> Sidelever cocking precharged pneumatic.	<b>WEIGHT:</b> 3.3 kg. (7.3 lbs.) (unscoped).	<b>PRICE:</b> £450 incl. VAT. Price includes snap-fit charging connector, two magazines, cylinder plugs and one-year warranty.
<b>CALIBRE:</b> .177 (4.5 mm.) and .22 (5.5 mm.).	<b>TRIGGER:</b> Two-stage, fully-adjustable, curved blade.	
<b>MAGAZINE:</b> 10-shot, rotary, removable.	<b>SAFETY:</b> Manual, resettable.	



charge. Even so, Hatsan have cleverly designed their stock so that it's clear of the air cylinder, touching only at the collar which also supports the barrel midway along its length.

Up front, the choked muzzle has been threaded to 0.5-inch UNF for a silencer – and although the AT44's report isn't loud enough to warrant one, I'd *definitely* fit some form of muzzle extension just to take off the collar which looks rather unsightly compared to the rest of the rifle.

The cast sidelever, on the other hand, is beautifully styled. It springs out to around 80 degrees once you release it from the close position. Not much effort is then required to cock the hammer as you only need to pull it a further 10 degrees or so. This final procedure also automatically sets the safety catch at the end of the breech and indexes the magazine a notch, while returning the lever feeds a pellet into the rifled breech.

Hunters will be pleased that the auto-safety can be quietly re-set if required – you see a red dot when it's 'off' by the way – and won't be disappointed with the ease at which the rotary magazine can be put in and taken out of the rifle. There's a spring-tensioned, brass bolt which holds the magazine in position, and moving this forward automatically 'ejects' the mag. It won't take you long to get into the knack of operating this bolt with your thumb and catching the mag in your waiting palm.

As a hunter, I also give Hatsan the thumbs-up for the AT44-10's removable, 0.18-litre air cylinder. Machined with a mid-taper from a one-piece, seamless steel tube, you can quickly unscrew it – even when charged – from the action. If you know you're going to shoot more than 50 shots in a session, carrying a ready-filled spare into the field would certainly be a lot easier than lugging around a diver's tank, that's for sure. Hatsan also supply a large brass discharging cap should you want to completely empty the air cylinder of air – you simply screw it into place and then tighten up the grub screw at the end to 'bleed out' all the air.

Like I said, Hatsan have just about every practical advantage covered with their inaugural AT44-10 PCP. Load its magazine correctly, and you'll find this an extremely capable rifle in the field. ⊕

While there's only pressed chequering on the pistol grip, you'll have no worries about keeping a slippery palm in position on the fore-end thanks to the slightly 'roughened' texture of the polymer stock – and, being a dense, matt black, there's no likelihood of it flashing in the sunlight to give your position away to the quarry.

The underside of the fore-end is quite flat, with rounded edges that fit comfortably into your hand, and if you favour taking long shots off your knee, you'll like the lowered table immediately in front of the trigger guard.

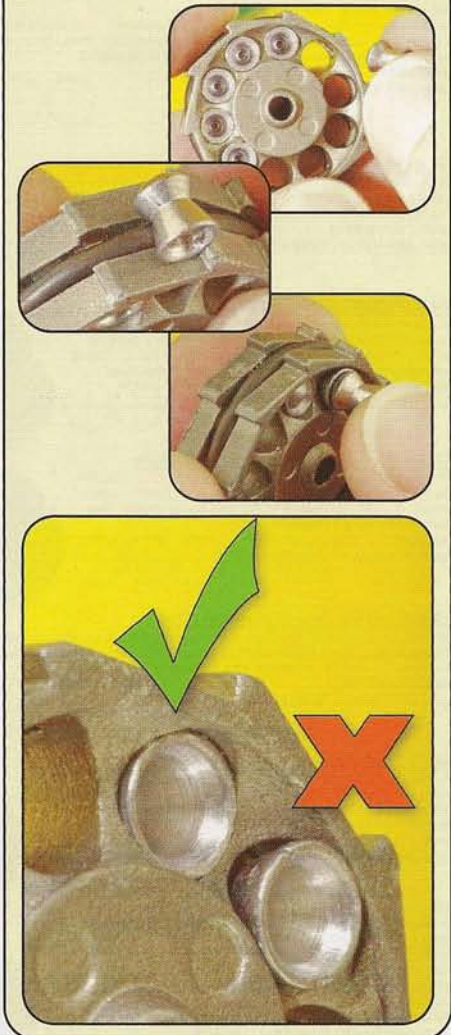
As well as its weight-to-strength advantage, a polymer stock also has the benefit that it doesn't warp and twist like wood, so you don't get any stresses on the action which can, sometimes, result in zero shift as the rifle cycles through its

## CORRECT MAGAZINE LOADING

It is essential that you correctly seat the pellets into the magazine's chambers if you want to make the most of the AT44-10's inherent accuracy.

Pellets with narrow head and skirt diameters work the best – but 'tighter' ammo will shoot good groups *providing* you make sure you seat it all the way into the chamber, so that the rubber O-ring grips at the pellet's waist and the skirt isn't protruding.

If you can't get the pellet skirt flush with the chamber using your nail, seat it with another pellet or pellet seating tool – but take care not to push the pellet past the O-ring so that its nose pokes out of the magazine's front face.



### BENCH MARKS – HOW NIGEL ALLEN RATES THE HATSAN AT44-10

ACCURACY

HANDLING

TRIGGER

FINISH

VALUE FOR MONEY

For best results, make sure you load the magazine correctly

Comes to the shoulder 'on point' and balances very well

Offers all the adjustments you'll need for a great release

Admire its shooting ability rather than its overall finish detail

An excellent inaugural model that fulfils its Eastern promise