

HOT hunters FOR THE FALL

SEE HOW THREE PERFORM AND SOME OF THE BEST OF THE REST



The author tested three leading hunting knives, from left: the DiamondBlade Summitt, Gerber Metolius lock-blade folder and Kershaw Antelope Hunter II fixed blade. (Durwood Hollis photo)

Cutting through the wire-like hair and tough hide of a wild pig demands a lot of any knife. The author and his hunting buddies used the three test models to skin a pair of big boars and evaluate the knives' overall performance. (Durwood Hollis photo)



All those who participated in the testing gave the DiamondBlade Summitt rave reviews for its versatile blade design, extreme sharpness and enhanced edge retention. Due to the extreme Rockwell hardness (65-68 Rc) of the edge, the author said he experienced some difficulty in sharpening it. (Durwood Hollis photo)

TEST RESULTS

KNIFE	FIELD DRESS	SKIN	DEBONE	TROPHY WORK	HANDLING EASE	SHARPENING EASE	CARRY CONTAINMENT	VALUE	TOTAL
ANTELOPE II	5	4	3	3	5	5	5	5	35
METOLIUS	4	5	2	2	4	3	5	5	30
SUMMITT	5	5	3	3	5	2	5	1	29

*Each knife was evaluated on a scale of 1 to 5, with "5" representing outstanding performance in any category.

Late this past spring, two assignments came my way at the same time. One involved testing a new rifle and ammunition, the other a trio of new hunting knives. Even though all the traditional big-game hunting seasons were months away, near where I live in California it is possible to hunt wild pigs year around. (See page 20, September *BLADE*.) Since they have wire-like hair, tough hide, thick cartilage and big bones, the boars are the ideal subject to put bullet and blade to the ultimate performance test.

The knives I field tested included the DiamondBlade Summitt straight hunter, which features a drop-point D2 blade with a Friction Forged® edge heat treated to a Rockwell hardness of 65-68 Rc, and black Micarta® scales; the Kershaw Antelope Hunter II, another drop-point fixed blade, this time of AUS-8A stainless at 58-59 Rc, with a safety orange co-polymer handle molded directly onto the tang; and the Gerber Metolius lock-blade folder, with a modified drop-point blade of 9Cr18MoV stainless (58-60 Rc) and a SoftGrip handle (synthetic rubber overmold on a glass-filled nylon base).

The hunt was conducted on the central

California coast at properties leased by Camp 5 Outfitters. In all, six writers from the shooting and hunting community participated in the test.

Things got off to an early start the first evening when a nice-size meat hog hit the ground. The first knife we tested was the Gerber Metolius. Since its blade tip is somewhat rounded, cutting into the tough hog hide was a bit difficult. Also, the blade is rather broad, not ideal for coring the terminal end of the digestive system. Despite the minor hindrances, we accomplished the field dressing with no real problem.

The next morning I scored on a big old boar, which enabled me to use the Kershaw Antelope Hunter II. The blade's sharp point and narrow width are just the ticket for field dressing. In addition, the molded thermoplastic handle is easy to grip and provides enhanced blade control.

After removing the hog's lower hocks and slitting through the hide in preparation for skinning, all of which necessitated cutting across and through a lot of thick hair, the blade edge began to fade. However, a little work with a diamond rod brought it back to life and solved the problem.



FIELD TESTING

One of the other hunt participants also bagged a huge boar, a job for the DiamondBlade Summitt. After getting the job started, I handed the knife to our two hunting guides. They skin dozens of wild pigs on a regular basis and know what to expect from a knife. "This is sweet," one guide said after the Summitt sailed through the work. After skinning both pigs, the blade was still sharp and ready for more.



According to the author, the Kershaw Antelope Hunter II handled field-dressing chores without a hitch. (Durwood Hollis photo)

SEVERAL OF TODAY'S HUNTING KNIVES

- **Al Mar Payara:** The blade tip combines three distinctive grinds, and possesses fantastic cutting power and penetration for both wilderness work and game care.
- **Benchmade Activator:** Includes two drop-point fixed blade models, one a tad smaller than the other. They feature D2 tool steel blades and stabilized winewood handles.
- **Blade-Tech N'yati:** The CPM S30V blade steel offers excellent edge holding, and an innovative Kydex® sheath affords a variety of belt-carry positions.
- **Browning Micarta Big Game Series:** Two fixed-blade models, with or without gut hooks. The broad drop-point blade combines a sweeping belly with a deep hollow grind. A special feature locks the knife into the sheath.
- **Buck ErgoHunters:** The ErgoHunter Skinners are sheath knives with generous blade bellies. Grip ridges and a large choil enhance purchase and blade control. Available in 420HC, 12C27Mod or CPM S30V stainless steels.
- **Canal Street Folding Hunter:** Combines clip-point and skinning blades in an over-size slip-joint folder.
- **Chris Reeve Inyoni:** Of CPM S30V stainless, the satin-finished, elongated drop-point blade has a short serrated section near the handle offering enhanced versatility.
- **Cold Steel Pendleton Custom Classic:** Designed by veteran knifemaker Lloyd Pendleton, the drop-point hunter has an extra stout spine and tapered tang.
- **Columbia River Knife & Tool Kommer 2-Shot Hunter:** Includes a clever sheath that holds two extra cartridges. Designed by former Alaskan guide, knifemaker Russ Kommer.
- **Condor Classic Hunter:** Features a satin-finished, back-slanted drop-point blade of 440A stainless and a distinctive blue rubber handle. Easy on the wallet.
- **Dozier Hunters:** Bob Dozier's three fixed-blade hunters, the Professional Guide, the Companion and the Personal Utility Knife, crafted from D2 tool steel.
- **Hallmark Woods Camo Hunter:** Crafted from 420HC stainless in either a drop- or clip-point blade. The aluminum handles are anodized in a woods-camo pattern.
- **Leatherman Klamath:** This innovative folder combines a locking, one-hand opening, drop-point blade with a stowable gut hook in the same frame. A belt-case-mounted, diamond-coated sharpening rod completes the package.
- **Marble's Trailmate:** Designed by knifemaker Steven Kelly, the straight hunter features a 154CM stainless blade, a jugged-bone handle and a nifty belt sheath that provides horizontal carry.
- **Meyerco Charles Sauer fixed-blade hunters:** Knifemaker Charles Sauer's collaboration with Meyerco includes a combo caping set that pairs a drop-point hunter with a rounded-tip caper.
- **Outdoor Edge SwingBlade:** When a release button is depressed, the two-in-one blade revolves out of the frame, exposing either a drop-point or gutting pattern.
- **SOG Revolver:** Combines a two-in-one gut-hook main blade with a fine tooth survival saw; simply depress a locking lever and rotate the dual function blade out of the handle.
- **Spyderco Bushcraft:** A collaboration between tactical "bush crafter" Chris Claycomb and Spyderco for a variety of wilderness chores, including game care.
- **Timberline Alaskan Skinner:** Another Russ Kommer design, the straight skinner features a hollow-ground, 440A stainless drop-point blade and a finger-grooved Zytel® handle.

How They Stack Up

DiamondBlade Summitt: When used for both field dressing and skinning, the Summitt performed flawlessly. It was incredibly sharp and remained so throughout basic field care. And the sharp edge was an asset for deboning. However, a thinner and slightly more flexible blade would have worked better when separating muscle from the animal skeleton. While it is possible to cape an animal for a trophy shoulder mount with the Summitt, the blade shape and length are too large to be ideal for the assignment.

The leather sheath is well designed and a Kydex® insert prevents the blade from perforating the leather. The relationship between blade and handle eliminate hand-and-arm muscle strain, even when the knife was used for an extended period. Since the edge is extremely hard (65-68 Rc), sharpening it is difficult and requires a diamond stone or rod with an aggressive grit. The knife's cost is rather steep (\$399.99 manufacturer's suggested retail price [MSRP]). When edge performance is factored into the value, however, the cost is somewhat mitigated.

Gerber Metolius: While the Metolius worked well for field dressing, more point to the blade would ease the job of punching through tough hide. However, the slightly rounded point is ideal for skinning. The blade thickness and rounded tip make deboning more work than necessary, and the same features render the knife less than ideal for trophy work.



While the author found the Gerber Metolius to be an excellent skinning knife, he said he experienced initial difficulty punching through tough hog hide with the somewhat rounded tip. (Durwood Hollis photo)

Outdoor Edge has repackaged the **SwingBlade** with the company's **Kodi-Saw** in the new **SwingBlade-Pak**. The **SwingBlade's** rotating blade is a **combo skinner/gut-hook**. The **Kodi-Saw** blade is **6 inches long**. **Blade steel on both is AUS-8**. **MSRP: \$119.90**. (Outdoor Edge photo)



The slightly tacky handle is easy to grip, even when covered in animal blood and grease. The synthetic fabric belt provides outstanding carry convenience. The main problem encountered when attempting to sharpen the blade was the rounded tip. It is a little troublesome when attempting to maintain the proper edge angle. Affordable at an MSRP of \$39.95, the Metolius represents a solid combination of design, quality materials, construction and value.

Kershaw Antelope Hunter II: The thin, pointed blade is just the right shape for field dressing and worked well during skinning. While a bit short to be a serious boning knife, it handles the job adequately. Even though the blade is rather large for trophy work, it was used to remove the cape without major impediment.

The leather sheath holds the knife tightly and the one-piece wrap-around keeper strap prevents accidental loss. Like most fixed blades, the Antelope Hunter II is not particularly comfortable for belt wear when seated (getting into and out of a vehicle). The blade responds quickly to sharpening efforts, though edge retention is less than optimal. The knife works well as a game care tool and represents a good value (\$39.95 MSRP).

Your Hunting Needs

The knives used in the field test are representative of a number of today's new hunters. See the sidebar on page 34 for more on the latest knives that may suit your hunting needs.

For the contact information for the knives in the story and sidebar, see "Where To Get 'Em" on page 89.

BLADE

Pacific

Efficient ~ Tough
~ Exceptional ~

Pacific—designed to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne).

Glass breaker on handle point

Serrations on both sides of cutting edge

Grooved handle for extra grip

Blade: 6 inches CPM S30V stainless steel

Handles: Black canvas micarta

Sheath: ACU Combat Master by SpecOps Brand™

American Made Knife of the Year

Chris Reeve
KNIVES



www.chrisreeve.com

208-375-0367

