

There are lots of bits and bobs you can buy that help you out, so here's a list of worthwhile purchases.

Bean bag



You'll use this for almost every shot, so go for a special FT shooting one made of heavy duty waterproof nylon. They are filled with polystyrene beads that compress down over time and you may need to top it up after a while. There are rules relating to bean bags, but for practice you could use a firm cushion. £15-£30. It's also quite easy to make your own that complies with the rules if you can persuade someone with a sewing machine to do it for you. This is something worth buying early on as it's useful at picnics, the beach or in the garden if you

decide shooting is not for you. Note that these may not be used in UKAHFT shoots.

Gun case

Both a legal requirement and a sensible way to protect your kit. Avoid flimsy gun slips and go for either a hard case or one with thick padding. You can never have too



much foam. Check that your gun and scope will fit inside and that you can get it into your car! Shot gun cases are usually too small and if you have a large scope you may need a double case. Never carry a rifle or pistol in public (even between your house and car) unless it's in a gun case which prevents the weapon being fired. Not only is this a legal requirement, but in the current climate carrying any gun in or near a public place may end in tragedy. Over £100 for a really sturdy hard case, but good ones start at about £40. If it's for a Junior, think about a rigid case with locking points to keep the gun secure at home.

Chronograph.

A device which performs a calculation that gives you both the speed of the pellet and the amount of power being produced by firing a pellet past 2 sensors. Allows you to fine tune the performance of your rifle whilst ensuring you stay legal. This may seem like a luxury item to put in the essential section but it's up to you to ensure your rifle



is legal at all times and it'll be you that ends up in court if it's not. This may be something you buy between a group of friends or have access to at a club so isn't going to cost you a fortune. Combro make a really nice budget chrono, but it's often out of stock due to its popularity and quality and you need to adjust it for each rifle. If you're looking for something a bit bigger and easier to use with multiple rifles, the Skan Pro1 Series 3 comes recommended

and is what you'll often find on the chrono lane at competitions and is what we have at the club. Although the Combro and others are accurate and reliable, don't rely on

a chronograph to ensure you are legal, especially if you set your gun very close to the legal limit. Once they leave the factory they're not subject to either certification or frequent calibration checks that a Home Office certified chronograph does and although they may be better than 99% accurate on day one they could shift. Although your reading is likely to be close, we strongly recommend you keep the power of a rifle below 11.5ft/lbs to allow a sensible margin of error. Setting your rifle to 11.99ft/lbs is just asking for trouble and won't improve accuracy and given that no chronograph is 100% accurate anything over 11.75 ft/lb could get you disqualified at a competition even if you're still legal. If the chrono you use to set up is reading 0.5% slow and the one at the competition is 0.5% high there could be a difference of over 8fps which could be enough to get you a DQ. Also be aware that using a different pellet can increase the power output and that PCP rifles gain power in hot weather, potentially as much as 20% if it's left in direct sunlight or near a heater vent in your car, making you a prime candidate for Police interest, a fine and a criminal record. On some rifles there is a security sticker or marking on the power adjuster and any interference will invalidate the warranty. If you have a gun that's under warranty and it's over the legal limit you should contact the manufacturer before attempting to adjust it. They will either collect adjust and return it at their cost, direct you to a local agent who will perform the service or give permission for you to perform the adjustment yourself without warranty issues. Legally it's entirely your responsibility to ensure you are below the legal limit, the manufacturer does have a responsibility to ensure that the factory settings are not capable of exceeding the legal limit, but it is no excuse in the eyes of the law. If your rifle is overpowered only you will be held responsible. Also be aware that the current BFTA ruling is that all air rifles used in competition must be at least 5fps under the 12ft/lb velocity. £40 - £1000+

Non essential but useful:

Pellet pouch



Goes around your neck and has a pouch on a lanyard that you put pellets in. Much easier than fumbling with a tin, or putting them in your pocket. Very useful for all kinds of shooting. £10 - £20

Spirit level

A miniature one that clamps to your scope rail or to the top of your scope. Used to ensure you don't cant the rifle and helps to set up your scope. £15 - £25. Note that these may not be used in UKAHFT shoots.

Bore cleaners

Don't use brass or caustic products intended for firearms. Felt pellets or cotton pull through patches are best with a small amount of solvent oil applied. Some barrels really benefit from a regular clean every few hundred pellets, others hate it and will spit the next 20 pellets out in random directions until it gets some lead in the bore. Felt pellets are cheap and work well, the Logun pull through is better and the VFG

system is best but in most cases the felt pellets are all you need. Check that it's compatible with your rifle first as not all systems will physically fit your breech. For example the Logun kit will not work with the current range of Daystate rifles or the HW100. If in doubt go for felt pellets as they work in everything fairly well and are cheap. £3 - £50.

Flip up lens covers

Fitted each end of your scope they protect the lens from dust and water. When you want to shoot they easily flip up out of the way and then clip back down when you're done so much easier than the caps that usually come with the scope. About £15 a pair and best purchased at the same time as the scope to ensure you get the right sizes. Butler Creek is probably the best brand to go for.



Eye enhancer



These have mixed views and can be a nightmare if you wear spectacles but can really help in dark and bright conditions. Can't be used with a flip up cover on the eyepiece though. The Bisley Eye Enhancer is probably the best one if you wear spectacles, otherwise the DG eye enhancer is very popular but no good for spectacle wearers due to its wrap round design. £10 - £20.

Sunshade

A tube that goes on the objective end of your scope. Useful when shooting towards a low sun and helps prevent 'white out' and is essential on scopes with large objectives as they really suffer from this problem. Some scopes have these as standard, others as extras or you can make one yourself with plastic tubing or even card as long as the inside is matt black. You can also use an Anti Reflection Device (ARD) which is a honeycomb mesh about 5mm thick that goes on the front of the scope and is held on by a flip up cover. quite effective, but does rob the scope of some light. Up to £50.

Pellet lube



Can help, but don't believe the statements regarding significantly improved accuracy or power. We've found that some rifles do benefit from slightly tighter groups using lubed pellets, but a change of pellet type or size usually gives a similar improvement. It may give you an extra 10-15 fps velocity equating to a small increase in power. It's very cheap and a small amount lasts ages so no harm in trying and if you're washing pellets then it becomes essential to prevent oxidation of the lead. Only a very light film is required and always check your rifle on a chronograph if you start to use lube, you may find the extra velocity may take you over the 12ft/lb limit. £2 - £5 for a small bottle that will last for ages.

Shooting glove

A heavily padded and stiffened glove that's only worn on your left hand (or right if you shoot left handed). Used to eliminate the effect of your pulse on standing and kneeling shots, or as some padding if you shoot from the knee. They do resolve a problem that some people suffer from. Very unpleasant on hot days though! up to £80.

Windicator

A weighted feather or string that dangles at the end of the barrel. Gives an indication of wind direction and strength where you are sat, but alas, not at the target. Useful for indicating a change in wind direction but watching leaves or grass on the way to the target or using the target reset line (flick it as if you are fly fishing) gives a better picture of where to aim. Less than £1 for a DIY one. Note that these may not be used in UKAHFT shoots.

Hat

It's worth wearing a peaked or wide brimmed hat, especially on sunny days as bright light entering the side of your eye can make rangefinding very difficult. You can get special shooting ones for about £15 that are like baseball caps but with a longer peak and flaps on each side, but anything with a wide brim will help. Hoodies also help. Apart from this there are no special items of clothing required.

Tools and lubricants

A selection of hex keys, spanners and screw drivers are usually required to perform regular user maintenance and adjustment. Most are now metric, but some manufacturers still use metric and imperial (UNC, UNF and BA!) on the same rifle. Confusing! Don't assume any oil can be used on air guns. Refer to your specific manual for guidance on what to use and where to use it. Some parts of the trigger and cocking mechanism must NOT be lubricated at all and on spring guns it's imperative that none gets into the piston. Applying too much or incorrect types of lubricant may make the rifle inconsistent meaning an expensive service. Generally less oil or grease is better. Wipe over all external metallic parts such as the barrel and air reservoir with a lightly oiled lint free cloth periodically to keep it clean and rust free and if you've been shooting in the rain, take the action out of the stock wipe it all dry, lightly wipe all external metal parts with the oiled cloth (check the rifle manual first as some finishes have special requirements) and then let it all dry out naturally, ideally somewhere with a bit of air circulation and never near to a heat source such as a hair dryer or radiator as this could split or warp the stock. Once the stock is completely dry use a small amount of furniture polish to keep it clean and tidy or on unvarnished stocks use refined linseed oil or a specialist stock oil topped off with bee's wax. How you treat your rifle after shooting will have a significant bearing on it's reliability and accuracy as well as it's resale value. Even a small amount of rust is an indication that it's not been looked after and will put off potential buyers.