



SIERRA: GAMECHANGER

SIERRA'S LATEST LINE OF HUNTING/TARGET PROJECTILES HAS ARRIVED IN-STORE AT THE NZ AMMUNITION CO IN UPPER HUTT. PRIOR TO THIS NZG&H MANAGED TO GET HOLD OF SOME PRELIMINARY SAMPLES FOR A TESTFIRE. SUPPLIES WERE LIMITED AT THE TIME, BUT WE ACQUIRED ENOUGH TO ALLOW THREE OF OUR CONTRIBUTING WRITERS TO PUT A FEW OF THE GAMECHANGERS DOWNRANGE, USING THEIR EXISTING LOAD DATA.

Sierra's goal with this new line was to combine the proven accuracy of their MatchKing competition projectiles with the characteristics required for medium to big game hunting bullets, ie; target accuracy plus hunting performance in just one style of bullet. This is how the name "GameChanger" evolved.

To achieve this Sierra engineers thickened the jacket of the MatchKing, hardened its lead core by adding 3% more antimony, then to aid expansion, finished it off by inserting a plastic tip into the former hollow-

point cavity. The result is what Sierra claims to be a "...super-accurate and tough game bullet".

The GameChangers are long bullets relative to their diameter, with high BCs compared to other bullets of similar weight. Sierra claims that the bullets will stabilize in standard twist barrels, but some may be marginal as NZG&H contributor Simon Gillice discovered when he shot the 90 grainers in his Sako .243's 1-10 twist factory barrel.

Craig Maylam also reports that a .243 GameChanger fired from his son James' 6mm

Remington rifle, broke up on impact with the spinal column of a fallow spiker (a neck shot). The fragmented bullet put the deer down, but not as fast as the hunters would have liked. Hmmm, but okay, these are early results with a very limited number of samples.

Has Sierra got it right, or are there likely to be some modifications in the pipeline for the GameChanger line-up? Read on now, but look for updated opinions in a later issue of NZG&H as more data is collected...



↑ Frazer and Isla in the Wairarapa hills. This is the 7mm SAUM rifle with the ASE UTRA suppressor.

“I MANAGED TO GET HOLD OF A SMALL QUANTITY IN 6.5MM AND 7MM AND DECIDED TO LOAD THEM IN MY CUSTOM 7MM SHORT ACTION ULTRA MAGNUM (SAUM) AND .264 WINCHESTER MAGNUM, FOR TESTING ON GAME IN CLOSE, AND AT EXTENDED RANGES TO 500 METRES.”

GAMECHANGERS IN .264 AND 7MM CALIBRES –

Frazer Winskill shoots the new Sierra projectiles...

Sierra recently released a new series of plastic-tipped hunting projectiles called the “GameChanger”. Sierra has produced some great traditional lead nose hunting bullets over the years with their GameKing and Pro-Hunter lines, and I have used them to shoot a lot of animals. The packaging labels them as Tipped GameKings and they are a lead-alloy core projectile with a tapered copper jacket and translucent green polymer tip. I knew that if they performed anything like a traditional GameKing then Sierra would be on to a winner.

I managed to get hold of a small quantity in 6.5mm and 7mm and decided to load them in my Custom 7mm Short Action Ultra Magnum (SAUM) and .264 Winchester Magnum,

for testing on game in close, and at extended ranges to 500 metres. The NZ Ammunition Company supplied me with some Hodgdon H1000 powder to try, which is very close in

burn rate to AR2217.

After loading up some rounds starting a few grains under my AR2217 load data I headed to the range with the LabRadar to determine the speeds and see which combinations shot best. The 7mm SAUM is built on a Defiance Machine action and has a Proof Research carbon fibre-wrapped barrel with a Trigger Tech trigger and AG Composites carbon fibre stock. It is a consistent ¼ MOA shooter and was put together by Mark Macfarlane at Desert

Guns in Cromwell. It proved itself again by pushing the 165 grain GameChangers at 3100fps and producing a 10mm group centre to centre. Happy with that I switched over to my semi-custom .264 Winchester Magnum built by Master Rifle-Smith, the late Robbie Tiffen at Gunworks Canterbury. The Mighty .264 did not disappoint, producing an 11mm group and pushing the 130 grain GameChangers at 3153fps.

With the hard work done it was time to test these new projectiles on some game. Heading to my favourite spot in the Wairarapa with my four-year-old daughter Isla, we tried to locate a fallow spiker for some

Spring venison. Luck was not on our side and with the Manuka planting about to go ahead the Cocky had asked us to remove as many goats as we could. I set up on the first two billy goats feeding up a native covered face 300 metres away. With the camera rolling I dispatched the first with a neck shot dropping him instantly. Observing the “dead right there” performance of the 7mm GameChangers when striking bone, I elected for a rear lung shot on the second goat who hadn’t moved thanks to the muffled report of the ASE UTRA suppressor. Aiming for the crease of the shoulder, I gently squeezed off the shot with the camera rolling. The sound of a good hit



⬆ A view of the .264 Win Mag (left) and 7mm SAUM cartridges and projectiles.

came back and the goat staggered forward three feet and dropped, never to rise again.

Once we recovered the animals it was clear the Tipped GameKings were completely penetrating and leaving 20mm exit wounds. The neck shot offered more resistance and therefore a more emphatic result with a very large exit about the size of my palm.

Happy at close ranges we elected to try to shoot some at 300

“ONCE WE RECOVERED THE ANIMALS IT WAS CLEAR THE TIPPED GAMEKINGS WERE COMPLETELY PENETRATING AND LEAVING 20MM EXIT WOUNDS.”

metres plus, I say “we” but really, I was keen to keep shooting and Isla was interested in the contents of the packed lunch! With the promise of a boiled sweet we moved to higher ground and settled in behind the .264 Win Mag. There was a consistent 15 mile per hour wind blowing from four o’clock that made wind calls challenging, but having practiced regularly in these conditions I was confident in stretching out to 450 metres. There were plenty of goats feeding between



⬆ A tidy 3 shot cluster from the .264 Winchester Magnum.

250-450m and I settled on a lone nanny with two juveniles. With a 1.4 mil elevation correction and 1 mil of wind, I sent a 130 grain bullet into the crease of the goat. Jumping at a good hit, she ran at a dead run for 30 metres before piling up out of view of the camera. I managed to shoot another pair of billies in the thick gorse with the .264 at 350 metres and a mob of nine goats was thinned to two at 400m before we switched back to the 7mm SAUM.

With all of this shooting most of the remaining animals had gone to ground for good reason and

with Isla’s patience running thin we shot a final nanny at 400m with the SAUM. Facing towards us, I aimed right between the shoulder blades and at the shot it dropped instantly.

Once we had recovered as much meat as possible we hiked up the ridge and headed back for a well-earned cuppa. All told we took twenty-five goats and the Sierra GameChangers proved to be a good reliable bullet. There was a marked difference in the stopping power in favour of the 7mm and I would primarily put this down to shot placement on my behalf, and bore size. Back at home I sectioned a bullet to reveal a thick jacket and deep hollow point beneath the polymer tip. The ogive starts at .038” and thickens to .044” at the base. This combined with the lead-alloy core produces good terminal performance on light game such as the feral goats I was shooting, and will no doubt produce even better results on deer.

Remember that if

⬆ Frazer noted that the heavier 7mm GameChangers put animals down faster and more emphatically than the lighter .264s (6.5mm).

“ALL TOLD WE TOOK TWENTY-FIVE GOATS AND THE SIERRA TGKS PROVED TO BE A GOOD RELIABLE BULLET. THERE WAS A MARKED DIFFERENCE IN THE STOPPING POWER IN FAVOUR OF THE 7MM AND I WOULD PRIMARILY PUT THIS DOWN TO SHOT PLACEMENT ON MY BEHALF, AND BORE SIZE.”

you want to shoot at extended ranges on game then have the respect to go out and practice in conditions similar to those you’ll be hunting in. Understand your ballistics, use aids such as rangefinders, ballistic apps to calculate windage and elevation, and if possible film your shots so you can learn from them, also take a dog to locate your fallen game. Always use a bullet designed to expand at the distance you intend to shoot at, and remember, perfect practice makes perfect.

Sierra has designed another great product and I’m looking forward to trying out the .277 140 grain in my .270 Winchester on tahr later in the year.

Warm barrels and stay safe out there!

Frazer





📍 Out in open country on a windy day, Simon puts five 6.5mm 130 grain Sierra GameChangers downrange.

SAKO 85 VARMINT .260 REM

Simon Gillice reports...

Nik sent me some 6.5mm 130 grain GameChangers to try in my Sako 85 Varmint in .260 Rem. This is my medium to long range competition rifle with a 26" Krieger barrel. There weren't enough projectiles available for me to do much in the way of load development, but I made up a few rounds with the same load of Hodgdon H4350 that has worked well for me with another 130 grain projectile.

The load shot well, although I let both 5-shot groups with it down by throwing a round out of the group – it would seem I need more practice with my consistency and trigger control using my bipod and rear bag! Both groups (without the fliers) were right about 0.5MOA shot at 110 metres. Velocity was good at 2868fps and consistency was good as well with an extreme

spread of 13fps over five shots.

I also shot a group on a steel plate at 365m (400 yards) in a gusting right to left wind. This group measured just on 1MOA in width but was under 0.5MOA in height. With proper load development I would expect to be able to improve on this performance in this rifle.

I also tried the 6mm 90 grain GameChangers in my Sako 85 Hunter



📍 The tight groups were expanded by a single flier, but Simon puts this down to his shooting on the day.

📍 The five-shot 400 yard group measured less than 0.5MOA in height, although the breeze spread the shots out to 1MOA laterally... (see text).

in .243Win. These 90 grain projectiles are relatively long though and the groups were showing signs that the bullets were struggling to stabilise in my factory 1:10" twist barrel. When the projectiles did stabilise the groups hovered around 0.75MOA for



the loads I tried (some tighter and nothing over 1MOA). However, when the projectiles did not stabilise they would throw a shot 6-8" outside of the group

and produce a slightly oval hole in the target. The loads I tried were produced with Lapua cases and Hodgdon H4350 powder.

Simon



ⓘ These bullet fragments are all that Craig was able to retrieve... (see text).

Ⓜ James dropped the spiker with his 6mm Remington, but the bullet broke up on impact with the spinal column and did not exit.

obtaining better accuracy than 2 ¼ inches at 100 yards and this came out to near 4 inches at 200 yards. The velocity was measured at 2870fps 16 feet from the muzzle.

The rifle was sighted in and we took it hunting. Late in the afternoon we managed to stalk within 110 yards of a small mob of fallow deer and James took a spiker with a central neck shot. We chose this shot as we wanted to see what would happen when the projectile hit the most solid bone mass on the deer, and of course it ruins less meat too. The projectile came apart on contact with the spinal column and produced a large surface wound which was not immediately fatal. In skinning the animal I managed to find two small slivers of jacket and part of the plastic nose. There were small pieces of lead throughout the neck but no exit wound.

I was surprised with this performance so I read an advert on the internet for the projectiles. I learned that

“IN SKINNING THE ANIMAL I MANAGED TO FIND TWO SMALL SLIVERS OF JACKET AND PART OF THE PLASTIC NOSE. THERE WERE SMALL PIECES OF LEAD THROUGHOUT THE NECK BUT NO EXIT WOUND.”

Sierra GameChangers are an adaptation of the Sierra MatchKing projectiles with a special lead core and a plastic tip inserted into the open pocket (ie; the hollow-point).

Based on the results we obtained, admittedly from just one shot on a game animal, I would like to do more field testing with these projectiles. A 6mm Remington is a relatively high velocity cartridge and it is possible that at slightly lower velocities the results would have been different. Also, there are many variables, including the angle the shot was taken at and the exact point of bullet impact, that could affect the result.

Craig

.243 90 GRAIN PROJECTILES

Craig & James Maylam hit the hills for fallow

I was recently sent a sample pack of Sierra GameChanger projectiles for evaluation and decided to test them in my son's custom 6mm Remington. The rifle was built by myself and Mark from Desert Guns for my son James when he was 12. I used a small ring Mauser action and mated it to a Remington barrel and a Boyd stock. It has a Traister cock on opening kit and a Timney trigger. This rifle, when shot with its normal load – a Hornady 87 grain BTHP backed with 43.5 grains of IMR4350, will shoot ½ inch 100 yard groups all day. The rifle is James's fallow deer rig and he's taken a lot of animals with it.

First, after measuring the throat on the rifle I calculated the ideal overall length of the

loaded round and discovered that because of the shape of the projectile's nose and

the shallow angle of the boat-tail, with the projectile seated to clear the lands by .2mm, as this rifle prefers, I would end up with exactly 2.8mm of projectile in the case. This is not enough to ensure durability for hunting purposes, so I was forced to seat the projectiles deeper which meant they cleared the lands by the much greater distance of 2.3mm.

I am convinced this is why I had difficulty