

The SMK XS19-18 may be a bargain basement air rifle but its features and performance would put many higher priced weapons to shame



Revelation!

Bruce Potts is surprised as he tests the SMK XS19-18 air rifle and finds that you don't have to spend a fortune to get an accurate springer

We are all feeling the pinch these days, so everybody looks for value for money when considering their next purchase; so it's nice when you actually get a bargain once in a while.

Sportsmarketing have a huge selection air rifle related products and sell the very reasonably priced SMK range of airguns from China. I will be honest and say that I have never tested an SMK before, but now I have one in my hands I can see why SMK have such a large range of rifles on the market today.

Bargain priced break barrel

This XS19-18 model is a budget priced rifle designed to offer a full power and adult sized weapon primarily for hunting use but then again ideally suited for a spot of plinking in the garden also. This is the basic model although a custom version is offered with walnut stock if you so desire but as it is I think it's a very good serviceable hunting tool, something you are not going to worry about scratching in the hedgerows.

The rifle has a traditional break barrel cocking mechanism which I have always favoured

for its simplicity of design.

The crucial part with regard to consistent accuracy and velocity is how the barrel locks in line with the receiver. Any slack here and you are doomed. The SMK has a very good lock up, using the detente catch system which means it has a sprung plunger catch that locks solidly into the base of the receiver face as the barrel is returned into position. To make sure that it does not slacken after a lot of use there is a cross bolt pin that acts as a hinge for the break barrel action with a small grub screw that locks this into position to stop loosening.

The overall finish of both barrel and receiver is an even bluing to the metal parts but with a semi matt tone, ideal for hunting so no unwanted reflections here. If you prefer a bit of "bling" then the SMK XS20 Super Grade model has some very nice deep bluing.

The barrel is 17 inches in length and rifle's overall length is 43 inches, so not over long even if fitting a sound moderator. The test rifle that I borrowed from an underkeeper is in constant use so already had a moderator fitted using a compression olive system to the outside of the barrel as there

Ammunition tests: *All tests were made with five shot groups of pellets*

Pellet Type .22 calibre	Pellet Weight in grains	Velocity in fps	Mean velocity	Energy in ft/lbs	Accuracy at 25 yards inches
Air Arms Field	14.56	554.6, 549.2, 551.3, 541.7, 550.2	549.4	9.76	1.0
RWS Hobby	11.82	627.2, 621.4, 620.9, 631.5, 625.5	625.3	10.26	0.5
Premier	14.22	569.6, 564.2, 560.7, 564.7, 562.8	564.4	10.06	1.25
RWS Superpoints	14.36	558.3, 559.9, 551.1, 563.3, 560.4	558.6	9.95	1.0
Bisley Pest Controls	18.24	452.7, 458.1, 450.7, 459.9, 441.5	452.6	8.30	1.5
Bisley Superfields	14.98	505.6, 526.8, 501.4, 502.2, 521.7	511.5	8.70	1.75
Logun Penetrator	14.30	539.1, 542.8, 538.3, 551.0, 537.8	541.8	9.3	1.0
Webley Lazapells	14.47	511.2, 505.0, 508.7, 523.7, 501.9	510.1	8.36	1.25
FTT	15.6	534.7, 525.1, 559.9, 544.1, 551.0	543.0	10.21	0.75

Below: The test rifle was fitted with a PAO 3-9x40 scope, mounts and a moderator as optional extras



was no screw cutting to the barrel muzzle. This increased the overall rifle length to 47 inches. The moderator also acts as a handy cocking aid.

The barrel is used to cock the action in the conventional way, and internally a lever pushes the piston back, compressing the spring. I have to say this is where the nice surprise was; cocking the SMK was very easy and smooth, no drag at all, and the trigger locked the piston back with a good audible click.

When you pull the trigger the firing cycle is remarkably smooth with just a faint twang from the spring as it expands.

Sporter stock

There are no surprises with the fairly standard sporter styling of the XS19-18 stock. The slender forend is rounded and comfortable to handle, while twin securing screws attach it to the receiver. The pistol grip is well sculptured and fits the hand well and the raised comb Monte Carlo style helps with correct hold when a scope is used. However there is no chequering to either the forend or pistol grip area, I guess to save costs, which is a shame. The overall wood finish is in a matt lacquer.

There is a good solid black rubber recoil pad to keep the rifle in the shoulder and

finish off the stock. The wood used on this model is beech, and for a rifle of this price it is more than good enough and well suited for a hunting arm. For those that would like walnut with chequering, go for the custom XS20 model.

Sights, Trigger and Safety

I should imagine that well over 90% of purchasers will fit a scope but nevertheless this rifle comes with usable open sights fitted. The fore sight is a simple ramp affair but the rear sight is fully adjustable for windage and elevation. There are large adjustment wheels with audible clicks and the "u" shaped notch of the rear sight blade is flanked on either side with a Day-Glo fibre optic for high visibility. This is the difference between the standard XS19 model and the XS19-18 that we have on test.

A scope can be fitted to a conventional dovetail cut into the top of the receiver so the PAO 3-9x40 scope and Sports Match mounts fitted fine. The scope mounts did not move a morsel throughout the tests.

The trigger is a two stage affair but this one was more like a single stage on test. There is quite a lot of creep but no roughness before the sear breaks and the pull weight was 5.5 lbs - not wonderful but useable. The



For those that prefer to fit a scope, there's a substantial length of dovetail rail on the upper receiver

Day-glo rear-sight elements show up well if you intend to use the open sights



The slender forend covers the strong lock up in the break barrel action design



The stock has a matt lacquered finish with a comfortable cheek piece



The trigger has a bit of creep but is fine for a rifle of this price; note the safety lever at the front of the trigger guard

► manual safety lever sits within the trigger guard in front of the trigger blade. This design is not my favourite, but it is being used by a number of manufacturers now.

Range time

First off this was a four month old rifle a friendly under keeper had loaned me, so the power figures may be down a little as the rifle is 'run in', but he was still shooting rabbits at 30 yards with it.

Accuracy wise the SMK really liked the RWS Hobby and Field Target Trophies with five shot groups of 0.5 and 0.75 inches respectively at 25 yards. The Hobby's would be my choice here as the velocity of 625.3 fps was higher than the FT's although energy figures were comparable.

The Air Arms Field, RWS Super Points and Logun Penetrator all gave 1.0 inch accuracy at 25 yards with 9.76, 9.95 and 9.3 ft/lbs energy respectively but the SMK really did not like the Bisley

Superfields as accuracy was 1.75 inches, but these pellets were quite tight in this barrel.

Cocking the action was remarkably smooth, barrel lock up was positive and the whole firing cycle was fast too, with only a slight spring twang to be heard on discharge. For the money this SMK shot really well.

Conclusion

I have to say I had to eat my words a little here, thinking it to be a cheap and cheerful rifle only suitable for plinking when actually it's a very capable hunting gun. It's not going to set the world alight in looks, although the deluxe version in walnut is very nice, but it will do just fine as a knock about vermin getter for someone on a budget. Power was more than good enough and accuracy from the RWS Hobby pellets was very good. The price of £159.95 is great value and allows you to add a sound moderator and scope all for under £200. **GM**



In use in the field, the SMK XS19-18 is a lot of gun for your money

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Model	SMK XS19-18
Type	Break barrel cocking spring/piston air rifle
Calibre	22 on test (.177 available)
Overall Length	43 inches (47 inches with sound moderator)
Weight	6.75 lbs
Barrel length	17 inches
Stock	Beech Sporter
Sights	Fibre optic open sights (and scope mounting dovetails)
Trigger	Two stage adjustable
Price	£159.95
Contact	Sportsmarketing tel. 01206 795333 www.sportsmk.co.uk

SCOPE OPTION – SMK 3-9 X 40 MIL-DOT



TO MAKE the most of the XS19-18's sweet firing cycle and 12-groove rifled barrel, you will probably want to mount a scope and SMK's 3-9 x 40 – price £49.95 plus £5.95 for the mounts – complements the combo perfectly.

This telly boasts the airgunner's favourite magnification rating, allowing you to zoom between 3x magnification and a powerful 9x. The lower power is useful for 'spotting', while cranking the zoom ring to full power is ideal for max-range work.

With the scope firmly anchored to the XS19-18's grooved receiver, setting zero is easily achieved thanks to the scope's finger-friendly adjustment turrets, which can be clicked to the desired setting without any need of tools. Once set, the 'zero' stays protected courtesy of the screw-on caps.

The 40mm diameter objective lens has been blue-coated for increased light

transmission and maintains a bright sight picture on the gloomiest of days – and SMK's scope features a quick-focus eyepiece to keep the image pin-sharp no matter what range you're shooting over. Like the magnification ring, this turns steplessly, with a silk-like action.

Perhaps the optic's best feature, though, is its reticle – the ideal match for such a capable rifle. Despite its low price, the scope incorporates a Mil-Dot reticle (above) which features six dots on each of the four inner, thinner cross-wires, along with thicker, outer posts.

Very much in fashion, mil-dot reticles provide plenty of aiming reference points for shooting at different distances, and when allowance for wind drift is required. It makes accurate shooting a whole lot easier than when aiming 'into mid-air', that's for sure!

