



Quenching the hunter's thirst

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Featuring: Osprey Hydraulics™

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As hunters review their gear for the spring season, many are adding hydration packs, water systems and purification products to their equipment lists, says Lou Dzerziak.

"It's much easier to drink from a bladder while hunting than a bottle. There's less movement, it's hands-free and the carry is much more comfortable," explains Christian Mason, the director of sales and marketing at Deuter USA. "The military has used hydration packs for many years for this reason and hunters want that same ease of use, comfortable carry and capacity."

Hunters have embraced hydration for some time but, until recently, the choice has been relatively limited. Now hunters can select from a variety of packs designed specifically to carry hydration reservoirs. Other manufacturers offer customised systems consisting of reservoirs, hoses and bite valves that can be added to an existing pack.

Hunting for water

An older generation of hunters can probably recall a time when army-surplus metal canteens and canvas belts were used to carry water into the field. While more sophisticated hydration systems for the outdoors have been on the market for at least a decade, the pace of innovation from market leaders has slowed.

As the market has evolved, product designs are acknowledging the specific needs of hunters. Weight, reservoir volume, convenience and comfort top the list of considerations.

Convenience is another critical feature. "Anyone who has struggled trying to get a full bladder back into a pack will recognise the differences in the way hydraulic reservoirs are designed," reports Erik Hamerschlag, product line manager at Osprey Packs Inc. "Consumers are looking for a design that maintains the shape effectively and is easy to handle getting in and out of the pack's hydration sleeve."

In the field, small details matter. Hydration hoses that dangle or flop around can be a real nuisance to a hunter. Most new designs offer a way to store the hose and bite valve out of the way. Osprey, for example, uses magnets on the bite valve and pack harness to secure the system effectively.

