

# Test Fire

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*A sika stag stalked during the middle of the day in a scrub valley. He was bedded down, but the movement of an antler tip gave him away. A neck shot off my knees with a 130 gn Norma connected and he collapsed. The Finnlight is a pleasure to use and will suit most Kiwi hunters.*

The Sako 75 needs no introduction to New Zealand hunters. This innovative action in five different lengths has proven very popular since its release. Having reviewed this action previously, we won't go into great detail in describing it again. Suffice to say that it is a well thought out three lug design in a very rigid stainless receiver with integral scope bases.

## **The Action**

The Finnlight utilises the same 75 action as other models in the range and the test rifle in .270 uses the number IV action length. The trigger as I received it broke at 14 oz which is definitely a lot lighter than what the factory set it at. It was however reliable and repeatable at this level and a pleasure to use. The Doorplate and bottom of the detachable magazine are made of lightweight aluminium and have a unique bead blasted silver finish.

### The Barrel

To save weight, Sako have gone for a 21 inch barrel measuring .580 inches at the muzzle which is somewhere between a number one and number two spotter contour. They have also cut six wide flutes into the barrel reducing weight even further without giving away too much rigidity. The twist rate is 1 turn in 10 inches which is standard for the .270. There are no open sights fitted as this rifle is intended for longer range alpine hunting for which a scope is best. The fit and finish of all the metalwork, which is bead blasted with a satin finish, was excellent as you would expect from Sako.



Sako Finnlight disassembled, the wide barrel fluting stands out in this photo.

Bullet	Powder/grains	Muzzle velocity	Comments	Average Group Size
Norma 130 grain semi pointed SP		2976 fps	Norma factory load	.6 inches
Remington 140 grain extended range		2781 fps	Remington factory load	.6 inches
Federal Premium 130 grain B Tip		2849 fps	Federal factory load	.75 inches
Sierra 135 grain MatchKing	2213/59	2865 fps	50 thou jump	1 inch
	2213/60	2937 fps	"	1.25 inches
	2213/61	2982 fps	" /maximum	1.25 inches
Hornady 130 grain spire point	2213/61	2975 fps	5 thou jump	.5 inches
	2213/62	3040 fps	" /maximum	1 inch

### The Stock

The plastic stock on the Finnlight had the usual molded in grey rubber grips. This stock is black as opposed to the previous Sako synthetic grey and is a quarter of a pound lighter than the Hunter synthetic stock. It has the Sako emblem badge under the pistol grip and stainless sling swivel studs as per the other models. The shape and feel are also the same. The action is bedded front and rear and the barrel fully floated although it could have done with a little more clearance on the sides.

### The Calibre

The .270 Winchester is a deservedly popular hunting cartridge in New Zealand. As outlined in the Swiss Arms SHR test fire, it is a flat shooting cartridge delivering sufficient energy out to respectable ranges with manageable recoil. On the Range I fitted the wonderfully lightweight and crystal clear Swarovski 3-9x36 Habicht rifle scope supplied by the New Zealand Ammunition Company in Sako mounts to this rifle. This scope is in keeping with the purposes for which this rifle is intended and compliments it perfectly. The Sako mounts with their self aligning plastic inserts save you having to lap out of line scope rings which is a good feature as most people don't realise they should be doing this anyway.

The factory ammunition used was: Remington 140 grain extended range, Federal Premium 130 grain ballistic tips and Sierra GameKings and Norma 130 grain semi pointed soft points. I also worked up handloads with 135 grain Sierra MatchKings and 130 grain Hornady spire points with Norma cases, ADI 2213 powder and Federal large rifle bench rest primers.

This rifle really liked the Norma and Remington factory ammo, with the Federal Premium ballistic tips not far behind. The average of all groups fired was .8 of an inch which is very good for a lightweight hunting rifle. The smallest group

fired was a tiny .25 inch clover leaf with handloads using the 130 grain Hornady spire point bullet traveling at 2975 fps. I had one problem working up loads for the 135 grain Sierra MatchKing. This rifle has a long throat and when seating these bullets out to touch the rifling, the rounds ended up being too long to fit in the magazine. I had to jump the MatchKings 50 thou to use the magazine (seat them 50 thou from the rifling). This caused groups to open up an average of almost half an inch with this bullet. Any projectile with a long nose would also have to be jumped with a possible accuracy loss. Fortunately the Hornady spire points shot so well, as they often do, that the match bullets were not needed for accuracy.

The usual caution applies, these loads were safe in this rifle, but not necessarily in other .270's.

The pick of the factory loads for hunting with this rifle had to be the Norma.

Although one other equalled it for accuracy, nothing could beat it's 2976 fps velocity out of the shorter 21 inch barrel. My best handload topped it for accuracy at the same velocity, but loading up to 3050 fps the groups opened up to about one inch. This is still good hunting accuracy, but the small velocity gain was hardly worth it.

### Hunting

After having the best part of the day ruined by an unpredictable wind, I ended up stalking my way down a scrubby gully during the heat of the day after lunch. Luckily I spied the tip of an antler move as a stag turned his head when he heard me. I dropped to my knees, closed the bolt and squeezed off a shot at the upper neck as this and the head was all I could see. The stag disappeared out of sight, but I was confident as the shot had felt good. I made my way down about 100 yards to where I had last seen him and sure enough, the 130 grain Norma had connected right where I aimed and had broken his neck.

This rifle feels great between the hands due to it's stock design and balance. Even though plastic stocks are not my favourite for rigidity, this one works well in the field. The weight of this rifle, although not super light by American standards, made it a pleasure to carry. With its balance amidsthips, it stayed on your shoulder when slung, something muzzle heavy rifles aren't good at. This is important when you need both hands climbing round rock faces and bluffs, particularly when tahr and wapiti hunting.

### Conclusion

This new Finnlight is the pick of the Sako's for Kiwi style hunting. With its stainless 75 action, lighter barrel, detachable magazine, synthetic stock and integral scope bases, it has to be one of the best available to handle our climate and arduous terrain. It is available in 243, 7mm 08, 308, 25-06, 6.5x55, .270, 280, 30-06, 7mm Remington magnum and 300 Winchester magnum. The shorter actions weigh 6 pounds with a 20.5 inch barrel, the long actions such as this one, weigh 6.9 pounds with a 21 inch barrel and the magnum actions weigh 7 pounds with a 22.5 inch barrel. Personally, I would have preferred to see a 22 inch barrel on the long actions and a 24 inch on the magnums. The extra weight would be a small penalty to pay for a significant velocity gain, particularly in the magnums.

I also wish that Sako would include some fibreglass or kevlar in their synthetic stocks for rigidity, this would make a good stock even better. These two minor comments aside, I think you will quickly see the Finnlight out sell all other Sako models as they become available. Kiwi hunters have to carry their rifles further than their European counterparts and weight is an important consideration for us.

## Specifications

Barrel length	21 inches
Weight	6.9 pounds
Magazine capacity	5 rounds
Twist	1 in 10 inches
Metal finish	satin silver, bead blasted
Stock	black synthetic with grey rubber inserts
Price	around \$2500

