

Quietness was greatly aided by the Aptrail sole, allowing me to get up and close with this young promising sambar stag.

BY JULIAN DANBY

THE PERFECT BUSH BOOT

After years of wearing cheap boots of all sizes and models, I recently had the opportunity to test and review a pair of LOWA boots.

For years I had bashed my feet in footwear that was never the full package - uncomfortable, with typically a limited lifespan. After a couple of months hunting in LOWA boots with quality Thorlo socks and the knowledge of the technology used in the design of these boots, I have definitely been converted.

Not only are my feet in better shape when in the field, I now have a better understanding of feet/socks/boots as a system. I will never go back to cheap and nasty hunting boots. Hopefully by the end of this article you will be better educated as to the reasons why LOWA are world leaders in quality boot manufacturing.

LOWA headquarters is found in Germany's Jetzendorf village, in the region of Bavaria. Founded in 1923 by Lorenz Wagner, LOWA has reached the pinnacle of boot design and manufacturing sought after by mountaineers, hikers, climbers, outdoorsman and hunters for eight generations. LOWA has the proud reputation of being the only boot manufacturer to be granted ISO 9001 status for highest quality construction and process standards under the world's most stringent

manufacturing, environmental and labour regulations. LOWA has refined boot manufacturing into a fine art, thanks to highly skilled craftsmen, with the overall aim of quality and boot fit. It is interesting to note that LOWA is a family business with many second, third and fourth generation employees.

CATALAN GTX

The Catalan GTX was chosen following a comprehensive consultation with LOWA NZ (Beattie Matheson Ltd) on my requirements and the predominant terrain I hunt. This lightweight, all-round boot suits the different terrains that are encountered in the North Island and easier South Island country.

The new Catalan GTX is built on the WXL (wide) last as compared with the standard last, because it will fit more New Zealanders' feet. The Catalan has a full length stabilising system providing a softer more comfortable flex and uses the LOWA Aptrail sole. The trekking tread pattern of the Aptrail enhances contact area, has a self-cleaning tread for reliable traction and a pronounced front heel edge for traction

downhill. The 5mm heel tapering to 3mm in the forefoot of this boot provides stability without ruining flexibility - a great choice for the bush country. With no break-in period required for these boots I could hunt in them from the first day, which I did!

Here are the key features of the Catalan GTX so you can better understand the technology used to construct this boot.

LOWA FLEX

This boot introduces a new feature not seen in LOWA boots in New Zealand before. The LOWA Flex design results in less pressure transmitted to the forefoot. This is done by incorporating features including individually mounted lacing components with lacing all the way to the toe, soft leather or textile edging material at the ankle and flex-ridges on the soft underside of the tongue. The construction of this exciting new feature provides targeted flexing over the instep and down to the flex point. As a consequence, the resulting reduction in pressure from the above (dorsal pressure) automatically reduces pressure from below (plantar pressure), offering increased walking

comfort that you can feel and a perfect fit on the foot.

LOWA C4 TONGUE

The C4 tongue is constructed with 15 separate parts and designed to work with the way the foot naturally moves when walking. The design provides enhanced comfort and performance, and improves the flex and ankle control while reducing break-in time. Features include:

- Asymmetrical padding (thicker towards the outside of the foot).
- Recessed ankle section (inside higher than outside).
- Flexible curved insert towards the inside of foot.
- Soft edging on the upper end to give the benefit of greater instep comfort.

LOWA FLEXFIT

This allows for excellent flexing of the shaft whilst still providing very good ankle support - very comfortable when going downhill.

LOWA SPS-FLUKE (SUPINATION - PRONATION-SUPINATION)

The LOWA SPS-Fluke System is a valuable feature of the boot, encompassing support zones and

additional TPU (Thermoplastic Urethane) material to support the cut-away heel edge. TPU is harder than standard polyurethane, the basis of the midsole. This results in optimum foot stability, excellent walking comfort and improved traction and safety when going downhill. The TPU element on the lateral (outside of the heel) side prevents the heel from rolling too far and cants it back towards the medial side where again another element diverts it towards the lateral side of the forefoot and then back towards toe-off to encourage a better and more efficient walking gait.

LOWA X-LACING

The x-lacing system, incorporating rolling eyelets, ensures the tongue is correctly centred in the boot, avoiding pressure marks and blisters on the foot. This is achieved by a fixation stud on the tongue that is

attached from both directions by the lace system resulting in better pressure distribution and no movement of the tongue because it is locked in position, which also enhances comfort.

BOOT FITTING

The fitting of the boot is imperative for comfortable feet in the field. Below are a few key points on fitting boots correctly:

- Start fitting with a boot at least one size too large. Starting with a boot too small compromises the fit sensation for later in the fitting.
- Open the laces up wide so that the foot can easily slip into the boot, kick the heel back and lace up. This can't be stressed enough.
- Ensure there is sufficient space in front of the longest toe.
- Lace up the forefoot and continue lacing, ensuring the tongue is symmetrically set in and not creased.

There are four phases of shoe fit - static fit, weight-bearing fit,

functional fit and thermal fit.

Static Fit: The fit of the boot with the foot and rest (seated).

Weight-bearing Fit: Standing with weight on leads to change in size automatically as compared with static fit.

Functional Fit: The natural alterations under conditions of movement leading to different combinations of size, shape and proportions.

Thermal Fit: The natural alterations under conditions of heat, humidity and moisture.

A foot will increase about 5% in volume towards the end of the day, and more with rigorous activity. This is a function of blood flow as the body sends more blood to the muscles and tissues most in use at any given time and therefore feet become larger as they work - hence it is better to fit footwear at the end of the day.

Research shows that there are 36 different factors involved in what LOWA define as 'fit'. Further

to this, all people have 'mis-mated' feet when all dimensions are considered. The plan is to fit the 'mis-mated' feet into perfectly mated footwear. Heel to ball fit is a critical measurement to the correct fitting of any foot. Individuals may have the same length feet but have slight differences in ball joint position in the foot. The correct shoe fit accommodates the ball joint in the widest part of the shoe. The wrong sized boot, with the ball joint further forwards than the correct shoe size accommodates, can result in cramped and twisted toes, causing enlarged toe joints, bunions, strain to the foot arch and general discomfort. A scientifically fitted boot will have the ball joint of the foot and the arch base of the boot meeting at the same point. The arch of the boot rests comfortably on the full length of the shoe shank.

BOOT CARE

It would be a waste to pay good money for quality boots and then not look after them. Caring for boots is the difference between boots that last a couple of years and boots that last closer to a decade. It must be noted leather is a natural raw material that needs periodic protection in the form of water proofing and leather conditioning. LOWA produces two great products that are strongly recommended to significantly extend the life of your boots. LOWA Water Stop is a water proofing spray that closes the pores of the leather, preventing water absorption, while maintaining the breathable properties of the fine leather. LOWA Active Cream is ideal for conditioning fine leathers and will stop the leather drying out, which causes cracking of the leather.

The following 6 steps cover how to clean your boots properly:

- First, remove the insole and laces.
- Remove the dirt from your boots. Brush dirt off thoroughly under luke warm running water.
- Protect the leather from water using LOWA Water Stop. In order to 'close' the leather again, this spray should be applied while still damp.
- Maintain the leather's natural softness using LOWA Active Cream applied by sponge or cloth, apply more cream to the forefoot/flex zone area.
- Give boots ample time to dry - never place boots close to a heat source such as a fireplace»»

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»Up Close

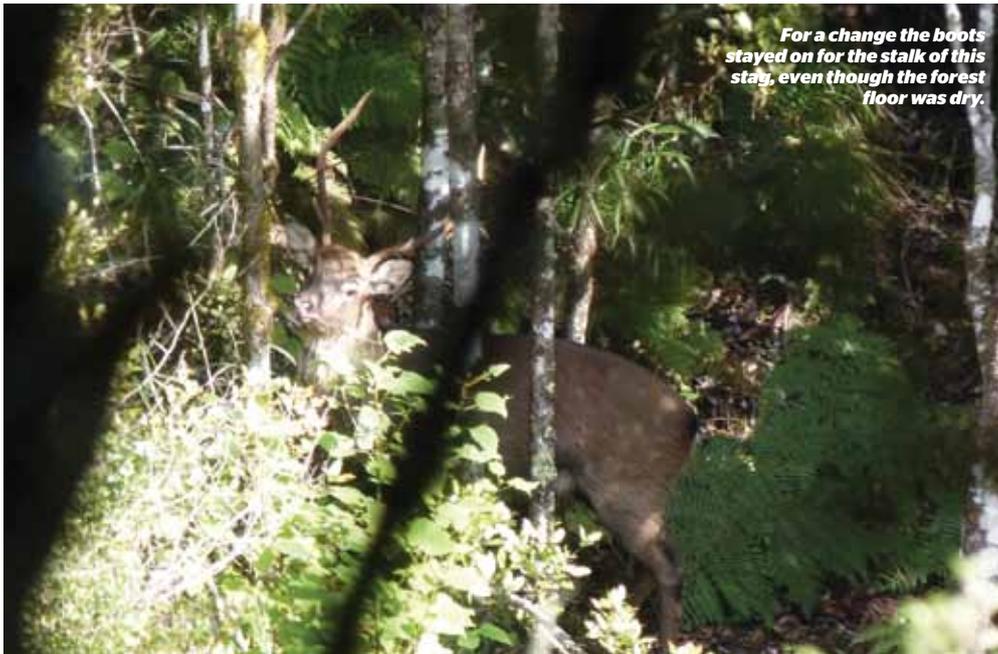


LowA 'Flexfit' for more natural forward ankle flex and heel fit.

LowA 'Flex"-independently 'floating' lace loops and lace-to-toe delivers perfect walking comfort.

Medium Flex 5-3mm nylon stabiliser for support and stability in rugged terrain.

» TESTFIRE LOWA CATALAN GTX WXL BOOT



For a change the boots stayed on for the stalk of this stag, even though the forest floor was dry.

CONCLUSION

The Catalan GTX has definitely exceeded my expectations for the comfort and stability a quality boot can offer. For the last two months I've been giving these boots a thorough workout and the only wear and tear has been on the first pair of laces! These boots accompanied me in the roar chasing red and sika deer and I was most impressed how quiet they are in the bush. LOWA have made a great decision matching the Catalan boot with the Aptrail sole. These boots have been great in the rusa country of the Galatea Ranges, a great test for both myself and the boots in tough terrain. The lightweight nature of these boots was a real asset on the long steep climbs up the range. At no time did I have any issues with blisters or chaffing, even the first time I wore the boots, thanks to the no-break-in period. The Catalan GTX incorporates features with great benefits that are unique to LOWA and are priced very competitively for high quality German boots. I thoroughly recommend the LOWA Catalan GTX; it is a boot that will suit many New Zealand hunters. **R&R**

or oven, or in the boot of the car. Never leave your boots to dry in direct sunlight due to the damage from UV.

- Store the boots in a dry, well-aired place and avoid dampness.

SOCKS

The importance of socks is often overlooked by the outdoors

enthusiast. Footwear should be looked at as a system - foot/sock/shoe. It must be noted that the foot can produce up to a cup of perspiration per day during high levels of activity. Moving this moisture to the outside where it can evaporate is a fundamental requirement for healthy feet. LOWA recommends

THORLO padded socks. THORLOS are constructed differently to other socks and have the following benefits:

- Reduction in shearing forces that typically cause blisters.
- Reduction in foot pressure resulting in less pain.
- Improved skin management.
- Improved blood circulation.

HELLO, TROUBLE.

I KNOW YOU'RE OUT THERE.
I HOPE YOU KNOW, I AM TOO.

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