

RIFLE TEST BREAK-BARREL BRILLIANCE

Mat Manning gets to grips with the new Luxus version of the famous Weihrauch HW80K

KEY SPECS



MAKER: Weihrauch, Germany
MODEL: HW80K Luxus
SUPPLIED BY: Hull Cartridge (weihrauch.co.uk)
PRICE: £540
TYPE: spring-powered break-barrel
CALIBRE: .177 and .22 (tested), .20 and .25 by special order
OVERALL LENGTH: 1132mm
LENGTH OF PULL: 362mm
BARREL LENGTH: 310mm
WEIGHT: 3.9kg (without scope)
TRIGGER: Two-stage adjustable
POWER: 11.5 ft-lb

Lasting success is not easy to achieve – especially in a world that has grown to expect change for the sake of change – but the iconic Weihrauch HW80K has managed to be a very desirable airgun for almost 40 years.

Back in the 1980s, I wanted an HW80K because it was the gun used by John Darling, the father of modern airgun hunting. Four decades later, I would still like to find a place for this remarkable air rifle in my gun cabinet. Its appeal to me isn't just because of nostalgia, though – it is because it is one of the finest break-barrel airguns that money can buy.

Apart from being able to hold its own against pretty much any break-barrel air rifle in terms of accuracy, the Weihrauch HW80K is also very kind on the eye. Numerous updates have been made to its internals over the years in order to maintain its enviable performance,

and now it has had an aesthetic boost in the shape of a new stock on the HW80K Luxus model.

The latest HW80K variant has a recommended UK retail price of £540. That is pretty serious money for a spring-powered airgun, but this is one of the very best, and of course you don't have the added expense of charging gear to factor in as you would with a PCP.

TAKING STOCK

The HW80K Luxus handle is an ambidextrous design made from beech. I am pleased to say that despite it having a rather contemporary look, the overall appearance of a traditional break-barrel sporter is still maintained.

Some people can be a bit sniffy about beech stocks on quality airguns, but I think the woodwork on this one is very good. It has a nice close grain and some subtle figuring, and the glare-free finish scores big points with me – not just for looks, but also because

it's less likely to attract the attention of sharp-eyed quarry.

There is no denying that with an unscoped weight of 3.9kg and measuring just over 113cm with the supplied silencer fitted, this is an adult-sized airgun. Length of pull is 362mm, and the point of balance was 11cm in front of the trigger blade after I fitted a scope. Despite its proportions, the HW80K Luxus feels very natural in the shoulder and isn't unwieldy.

The forend of the stock is distinctly long and provides plenty of room for your leading hand, whatever hold you prefer to adopt. Aesthetics are always a matter of personal taste, but I believe they are enhanced by the forward-sloping, inward-tapering front edge on this model.

I like pistol grips with a steep rake. The angle of the grip on this Weihrauch is far from vertical, but I found it more than adequate and, most importantly, it ensures sound trigger attack.



Weihrauch's excellent two-stage Rekord trigger delivers crisp shot release and is easily adjusted via the screw just behind the blade



Good eye/scope alignment is assured by a high and clearly defined cheekpiece

Weihrauch's renowned silencer comes supplied and brings a noticeable reduction to muzzle report

All the famous HW80K features are present on the Luxus, including the excellent Rekord trigger

The long forend can accommodate a variety of hold styles, and is embellished with some neat grip-enhancing panels

The design of the ambidextrous Luxus stock ensures a good fit with correct eye/scope alignment and good trigger attack

The HW80K Luxus is surprisingly easy to cock despite its full-power output

Moving back, the cheekpiece is clearly defined on both sides of this ambidextrous handle and has plenty of height. This is a scope-only airgun so it is vital to have sufficient elevation in the cheekpiece to ensure that your eye is correctly aligned with your chosen optic. Weihrauch has paid close attention to that detail, and this stock is spot on for a telescopic sight – even if it's secured in relatively high mounts.

The butt end of the stock is finished with a brown rubber recoil pad. Between that and the wood sits a black spacer – it's a subtle touch, but I think little details like this boost an airgun's appearance.

Aesthetics get a further boost from some very neatly engraved panels on both sides of the pistol grip and forend. Rather than conventional chequering or stippling they comprise of sloped grooves, which apart from looking stylish, do a terrific job of enhancing grip. The forend panels also incorporate the Weihrauch logo – a subtle and tasteful reminder of this airgun's pedigree.

FEATURES AND FUNCTION

The Luxus version of the HW80K is available in .177 and .22 calibres, as well as .20 and .25 to special order. Its barrel is 310mm long, and while that may sound short, the length provided by the silencer provides leverage for the cocking stroke.

And that silencer actually works. While it can be a little tricky to tell how much reduction there is to the muzzle report of a spring-powered airgun because your ears are so close to the mechanical action, the downrange noise is certainly reduced.

The cylinder is machined with around 170mm of dovetail rail, which should be more than enough clamping space for any scope you plan to attach to this Weihrauch. It has also been drilled with three holes should you crave the added reassurance of an arrestor pin to guard against scope creep.

The generous length of the HW80K action means that you can use all but the longest of telescopic sights without risk of the front end getting in the way of the breech.



Long dovetail scope rails provide plenty of scope-mounting space, and are backed up by holes to accept a recoil pin



The automatic safety catch is operated by a discreet button at the rear of the cylinder

External metalwork, including the barrel and cylinder, has been given a lustrous dark blued finish synonymous with Weihrauch. This adds to the gun's elegant aesthetics, which are backed up by the rock-solid build quality and very clean engineering we have come to expect from this German gunmaker.

One of the most impressive features that you will find on a Weihrauch airgun is the renowned match-quality Rekord trigger unit. This all-metal two-stage system has been around for a long time now, but thoughtful tweaks have ensured that it is still one of the best, and it can rival trigger units on airguns costing three times the price.

The trigger on the test gun was near-perfect on its factory setting. First-stage weight was moderate and the travel fairly average, prior to a clear stop followed by an extremely crisp and predictable second-stage break. Rekord triggers are adjustable via the screw positioned behind the blade, and if you do need to make any tweaks, the Rekord is much easier to adjust than those on a lot of airguns.

Trigger blade design on the HW80K hasn't changed in quite a long time, and that is because it doesn't need to. It has a gentle curve as well as a wide, flat face that most of us tend to favour. There are some subtle grooves machined into the face of the blade and they do seem to enhance its feel.

This trigger has been setting the standard in terms of simple and effective performance for a very long time, and I have a feeling that it will continue to do so for some while yet.

There is an automatic safety catch at the rear of the cylinder. It is engaged by the cocking stroke – and you can see when it does as a button pops out on the left. To disengage it, you simply push the button in. Should you take the safety off and want to reset it, you can re-engage it by breaking the barrel and pulling it back down to make the pin pop out again.

POWER AND PERFORMANCE

The HW80K may have been around for a long time, but it is most certainly not old-fashioned. Its spring-powered action incorporates some very clever engineering and has evolved into something quite special. The result is a self-contained powerplant that delivers output close to the legal limit without feeling in the least bit strained.

Consistency is seldom an issue with Weihrauch springers, and the .22 calibre HW80K Luxus I was sent to review was spitting out 15.9gr FT Exact Jumbo pellets at 11.5 ft-lb, with a variation that remained within 8ft/sec over a string of 10 shots. That is better than a lot of PCPs at this price point.



Loading is direct to the breech and the HW80K boasts a rock-solid lock-up mechanism

The cocking stroke is very smooth and surprisingly easy for such a powerful break-barrel, and the linkage is free from any disconcerting rattles when you give the gun a shake. Smaller shooters may find the HW80K a bit of a handful, but most adults should be able to cock it with ease.

Loading is direct to breech, and the lock-up is extremely secure

“THIS WORKHORSE SHOULD GIVE OWNERS MANY YEARS OF SHOOTING SATISFACTION”

when you snap the barrel closed. Retaining systems on all break-barrels seem to have improved over recent years, but the sprung mechanism on this gun feels practically bomb-proof.

Some full-power springers can be let down by a snappy firing cycle, but the HW80K Luxus is a very smooth shooter. As you might expect there is some felt recoil, but it is more of a clean thud than a vibrating twang, and it is very easy to manage.

This gun is no lightweight, but I am convinced that its heft does a very effective job of damping down the recoil.

Consistent, accurate shooting with a spring-powered airgun is about practice and technique, but this Weihrauch makes it easier than most. Smooth power delivery, good fit and an excellent trigger

make for a highly effective shooting machine, and thumbnail-sized groups at 30m are quite achievable.

Accuracy like that means the HW80K Luxus is perfectly

capable of tackling live quarry. It is also a very gratifying gun to shoot, and I had great fun using it on the range and for backyard plinking. As break-barrel airguns go, the Weihrauch HW80K Luxus is not a cheap option, but it is a very dependable one.

Powerful, accurate, solidly constructed and, thanks to the new Luxus touch, very kind on the eye, this self-contained workhorse should give owners many years of shooting satisfaction. ●

THE AIRGUN SHOOTER VERDICT

“German engineering, consistent precision and an iconic reputation. The Weihrauch HW80K has been around for a long time, and the Luxus tweaks should help ensure that it remains at the top of its game”