

SHOTGUN TEST

Beretta Outlander semi-auto £1,075

In regards to form, function and value, Mark Heath thinks it doesn't get much better than the new entry-level Outlander semi-auto

Walnut stock comes as standard, although synthetic options and the new Max-5 camo are also available

Three-shot max now law for semi-autos

Fleur-de-lys proof mark is a stamp of quality

Beretta Steelium process employed to fashion the barrels

Barrel length comes in three main choices: 26in, 28in and 30in

★★★★★

competition shotguns. They are superior steel proofed with a fleur-de-lys proof mark and multichoked. The main choice in barrel length is between 28in or 30in. There is also a 26in option but I would perhaps only recommend it if you were in law enforcement and needed to remove some door hinges. Thirty-inch barrels on a semi-auto are a bit like 32in plus barrels on an over-and-under; I suggest you try before you buy if you are considering this length.

All models prior to 1989 had five-shot magazines and afterwards three-shot magazines became the norm due to a change in the law, which earned all semi-autos with a capacity in excess of three shots the designation of Section 1 Firearms. Owners with

models of five-shot capacity guns had to have the magazine crimped by a gunsmith to reduce the capacity.

The Beretta semi-auto has a reputation for reliability and longevity, born out by the fact that there are currently a number of A300s and A301s for sale on the trade index. The A303 in particular remains popular and sought after.

The cleaning regime is vital with gas-operated semi-autos, and this model has a self-cleaning piston. However, your cleaning regime should include the gas ports in particular; there is a good explanation from a GMK gunsmith online. ↗

FIELD TEST

The Outlander was tested in pouring rain – perfect given much of its intended use will probably be in the same conditions. I had my pockets loaded with two brands of ammunition in 28g and 36g to check the recoil absorbing capabilities. The 28g clay cartridge I used is one that in my opinion kicks like a grumpy shire horse and more than any other cartridge, game or clay, of any weight that I know so the test will be valid. It's probably the only cartridge of any description or load that I would choose not to use.

On the 80ft tower it was immediately obvious that the Outlander handling was perfect and the patterns delivered with the

half choke were devastating on the clays at every angle. On to the 130ft tower and the same results occurred on some 65-yard clays with the wind behind them. The handling remained precise and controllable. I mixed the cartridges up to see if I could get the gun to mis-feed but failed miserably.

The gun is comfortable to shoot with cartridges that might be considered to be heavy or to have a lot of recoil. It handles exceptionally well and is a reliable workhorse that can cover a wide range of roles. It might, however, not go down well on a formal driven day so leave it in the cabinet, even if tempted on the last day of the season.



The Outlander hits the mark in terms of handling and value

OUR VERDICT

I spend most of my working day teaching driven shooting and sporting clays so an opportunity to shoot a semi-auto is always a welcome change. The Beretta A300 appeared to be a good-looking gun when it was delivered and I was already dreaming of using it in the pigeon hide or on the duck pond.

The A300 we are reviewing is the entry-level model in the range designed for the field shooter, and is competitively priced at £1,075 for guns with either a walnut or synthetic stock, while the Max-5 camo version is slightly more at £1,145. The standard stock length on delivery is 14½in and the gun on test came with 28in barrels weighing in at 7.2lb, which is around 6oz lighter than an equivalent

“Cleaning regime is important with gas operated semi-autos to retain reliability”

semi-auto for competition shooting. Gun fit on semi-autos is generally a little more rudimentary than that for over-and-under and side-by-side guns, where gun fit can be achieved to a high degree. However, the options on the Outlander are better than most, making it easier to achieve a good fit both in terms of length – using Beretta pads and spacers – and drop and cast – using the supplied shims. These came after the arrival of the A390, allowing shooters to adjust the cast and drop on their guns to help with the fit.

Beretta has been making reliable, gas-operated semi-autos since 1965. The first, the A300, remained in production until the late 1970s, when

it gained multichokes and became the 301. Further developments in the 1990s meant that we had the A302 and then the popular A303, which included a sporting clays model for the first time; the A304 and the A390 followed as refinements were added. In 1999, the A391 was born with new model names, including Urika, Teknys and Extrema. Given their popularity in the pigeon hide and on the foreshore, this development was welcomed by many shooters.

Steel-proofed barrels

The Outlander barrels are made using the Beretta Steelium process, which is also used in the firm's best

19
/20

Action / Barrels
The expected high standard

20
/20

Handling
Very predictable and easy to handle

20
/20

Trigger
Outlander absolutely on the money

19
/20

Stock
Synthetic would be easiest to clean

20
/20

Value
At £1,075 you just cannot go wrong

98
/100

Overall
A reliable workhorse for a number of roles