



# Tripod versus 4 Stable Sticks®: Range Analysis

*By Mike Arnold*

*All of the ammunition used for this study was reloaded by the author.*

## **I was very dubious.**

That's the only word to describe my internal response when my Blaauwkrantz Safaris PH, Arnold Claassen, arrived with his newest purchase. He pulled his new gun-rest out of the packaging and explained that it would give me a stable platform from which to shoot a grey (bush) duiker, an animal that would be fortunate to achieve 50 cm of shoulder height and a weight of 18 kg. Though I enthusiastically exclaimed, "Great!" I was actually brimming over with unspoken doubts. Looking at his 'Bush Stick' model from 4 Stable Sticks®, I made a single observation: there were only two points of contact with the ground. My deluxe tripod, as expected, had three. My first thought was, "How can this possibly lead to less wobble than my 'sticks'." My second thought was, "I am in serious trouble."

What I did not appreciate from my cursory examination of Arnold's new client-help was the fact that my stock would be cradled back and front. I should have made the connection with an earlier conversation between, Phil, an experienced African hand and myself at my shooting club back in the States, but I did not.

Phil had approached me at the range when I was practicing with my tripod. He asked

what I thought of the rest. I told him that I could not keep my rifle from having a significant horizontal wobble. So, rather than just aiming and letting off the shot, I was being forced to time my shots when the sight pattern wobbled to the correct point-of-aim.

Needless to say, I was not happy with my accuracy. He told me that the key was to have something to stabilize your "back" arm (that grasped the pistol grip and trigger) and thus the butt of the stock. One PH of Phil's had accomplished this stability for his clients by allowing them to rest their back elbow on his shoulder. I wish I had remembered this conversation before we went after my grey duiker, because I might have been a bit more confident and thereby enjoyed the hunt.

Another point, before I move on to the conclusion of my duiker hunt, and then to the Range Comparison of my tripod and the two, 4 Stable Sticks® models: Videos and books that discuss African hunting emphasize the need to become proficient (read, 'accurate') with tripod rests because that is what the hunter will be using during his/her safari. Unfortunately, regardless of what is written (or depicted on film), few of us ordinary, run-of-the-mill hunters will find a tripod to be as stable as suggested by professional writers and those appearing

on TV hunting series. Whatever the reason (most likely actual differences in the proficiency of professionals versus non-professionals!), many hunters, using tripod rests, are unable to achieve the accuracy necessary for field shooting unless provided with additional stabilization. Using myself as an example, starting months before my safari, I practiced once a week, firing 20-30 rounds from my 7mm Remington Magnum and 10-15 rounds from my .35 Whelen Improved. Once my rifles were sighted in, I fired only from my tripod, but I eventually resorted to shooting only at 100 yards due to my lack of accuracy at 200-300 yds.

What is the catalyst for the following range test? That brings us back to my hunt for a grey duiker. I had never fired a shot from Arnold's Bush Stick rest. So, when the pygmy antelope charged out of the incredibly thick Eastern Cape brush – drawn out by Arnold's work on his varmint call – I was amazed at how there was absolutely no wobble as I tilted the rifle and rest to sight down the slope at the little male. My whispered, "What is the range?" was answered immediately by Arnold's, "Shoot him!"

I finished the trigger pull and the little animal folded. Right after my shot, Arnold informed me that his rangefinder had

intended as the 'control' rest type that was expected to produce the smallest group sizes. Instead, it provided an important indicator of why the Mountain and Bush Sticks gave such improved accuracy – it was due to the securing of both the forend and butt of the firearms.

The inaccuracy of the tripod rest was caused by the instability of the butt portion of the rifle. However, this reflects a positive aspect of this rest type; the tripod allows rapid, horizontal realignment of the sights on a moving animal. It is more difficult to horizontally realign the rifle using either of the 4 Stable Sticks® products, without lifting the entire unit. In contrast, vertical realignment with the Mountain Stick and Bush Stick is instantaneous, requiring the shooter to simply lean backward or forward; an equally steady shooting platform is obtained through the entire range of motion.

Though equivalent accuracy was obtained from the Mountain Stick and Bush Stick, the former model allows the user to shoot from a variety of positions – kneeling, sitting and standing. Thus, this model can be used as a standing rest when stalking, but can be quickly reduced in height to allow the hunter to fire from a sitting or kneeling position. Furthermore, the telescopic legs allow firing from slopes when hunting in mountainous terrain.

A very significant aspect of the three rest types is that all are rigid enough to be used as walking sticks. In this regard, though both of the 4 Stable Sticks® products will likely be lighter than most tripod rests, the difference in weight is unlikely to be great enough to cause increased fatigue for the user.

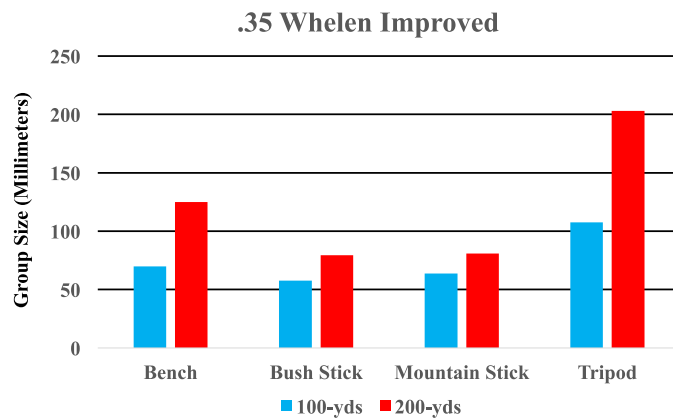
Finally, all of the rest types can be reduced in size for travelling in a hard-sided gun case. However, the Mountain Stick is the most straightforward in this regard because its telescoping legs allow quick reduction in size with no disassembly required. In contrast, both the Bush Stick and tripod must be broken down into component parts for transport and then reassembled on arrival in the hunting camp.

**Conclusions**

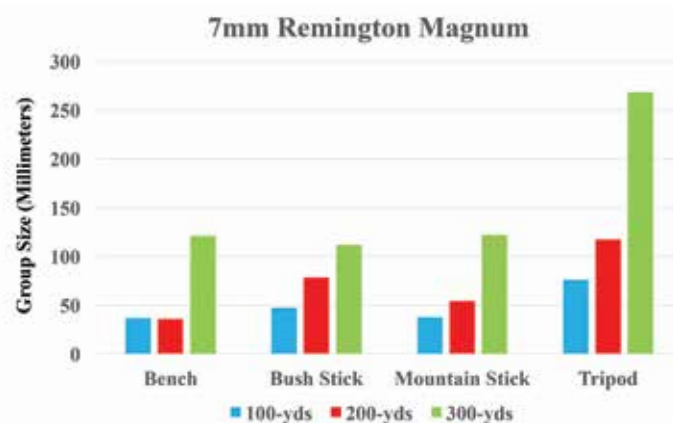
The results of this analysis are clear. If a hunter wishes to have the greatest accuracy, they should utilize a rest that secures both the forend and butt of their firearm - both the 4 Stable Sticks® Mountain Stick and Bush Stick provide this design feature. This stability did come at the cost of reduced horizontal mobility. However, most hunters (and their guides/PHs) will not be comfortable with shots taken at moving animals, so this



*Success With 4 Stable Sticks.*



*Results from the range analysis for the .35 Whelen Improved.*



*Results from the range analysis for the 7mm Remington Magnum.*

limitation may be less of an issue than first appears. Furthermore, the significantly improved accuracy over tripod rests, for both calibers and at all distances, suggests that it will be much more ethical for hunters such as myself to use products like the Bush Stick or Mountain Stick.

The flexibility provided by the Mountain

Stick, in terms of shooting positions, argues for its inclusion in most shooting and hunting applications. Because of the findings from this analysis, I will be using the Mountain Stick over the next several months while preparing for another African safari, and it will travel with me to Africa as an essential piece of equipment. 🇿🇦