

# Wet hands and damp safes

by Con Kapralos

Let's face it: it's easy to be tired and lazy after a shoot or a hunt. Once we get home, our guns are placed in our safe and *could* be forgotten about until we remember we didn't clean them after we finished shooting. On examining our firearms, to our horror, rust marks have appeared on the metal surfaces. Such an occurrence could have easily been averted if we had wiped down the metal surfaces of the gun to remove moisture. The biggest culprit being our sweaty hands and all the salts found in human perspiration.

## Silicon-impregnated gun cloths

Several makes of oil-impregnated gun cloths are available, usually containing silicon-based oils. These effectively remove moisture, such as fingerprints, and leave a microscopic film of oil over the metal surfaces that have been wiped over. Alternatively, a cotton cloth sprayed with a liberal amount of good quality gun oil in aerosol form will also do the same job.

I always have an oil-impregnated cloth in each of my gun cases and always make

it a habit to wipe over the metal surfaces of the gun before putting it away in its case or in the gun safe.

## Desiccants and dehumidifiers

Shooters living in the tropics or in areas of high altitude may experience problems with humidity, causing condensation on metal surfaces of their firearms. A small insurance policy is to invest in some sort of desiccant or dehumidifier, which basically scavenges any moisture from the air from within your gun safe, before it can condense and react with unprotected metal surfaces.

Desiccants trap water vapour and change color. Once they have absorbed all the moisture they can, they are easily regenerated by placing in an oven for a period of time. Most commercially available units have regeneration instructions provided.

A simpler and less expensive option though is those little sachets you seem to always get when you buy new shoes. These contain desiccant, the same ingredient found in the commercially made product. When my wife satisfies her shoe fetish and



Desiccant-type dehumidifiers all contain silica gel, which loses its color as it becomes hydrated. The sachets, left, are usually provided free when buying footwear and can be placed into your gun safe to absorb any moisture. You will need 20 to 30 for an effective application. These sachets can't be reactivated, but normal desiccant dehumidifiers can be by following the maker's instructions.



Electric dehumidifiers such as these drying rods are a better approach in areas subject to humidity.



Wiping the gun's metalwork with a silicon-impregnated cloth will greatly minimise chances of rust.



Silicon gun cloths such as the one made by Kleenbore are a small price to pay for a rust-free firearm.

brings home a new pair, I quickly claim these sachets and toss them in the back of the safe. I also remove any old ones, as they can't be regenerated.

I have seen electronic dehumidifiers, which are the top-line approach in combating humidity in problematic areas. They don't contain any sort of desiccant, but use some sort of electronic means, via a metal-plated rod, to repel moisture from within your safe. This would be my choice of protection if I lived in an area that experienced humidity.

### **Aero-dusters, compressed air and water dispersant sprays**

Most shooters would no doubt have been caught in a downpour, resulting in their gear becoming saturated. In these circumstances, it's imperative to completely remove all traces of water from the firearm.

Stocks can be wiped down. They won't rust, but they should be thoroughly cleaned and dried to avoid warping, especially wooden stocks.

Metal surfaces should be treated to a liberal dose of water dispersant spray. These sprays remove moisture quite effectively. A good wipe down is then required, followed by application of your oil-impregnated gun cloth.



Oil applied to a clean cotton cloth will do the same job as the silicon gun cloths - and they are cheaper to boot. A few drops, or a quick spray, onto a cloth is all that's needed.



Water dispersant spray is very effective in displacing moisture if your gun is wet. However, all traces of this spray should be wiped off before passing over metal surfaces with your oil-impregnated cloth.

Compressed air or aero-dusters can be used to dislodge water or dirt and dust from hard-to-get-at areas on the firearm. However, I would only use these for removing dirt and dust, as they could easily drive moisture further into those hard-to-get-at nooks and crannies and make it impossible to get to. Rust can easily take hold without you even noticing, but dirt and

dust can be rapidly dislodged with ease.

Water and salts are the number-one enemy of the modern firearm. While the gun manufacturer does everything they can to produce a product that can withstand such agents, a little care and elbow grease on our behalf come cleaning time will ensure we never discover corrosion on our prized possessions. ●