

# Tikka T3 Super Varmint in 223

## AND BURRIS ELIMINATOR 3-12X LASER SCOPE

**Tikka's T3 Super Varmint is basically the T3 varmint model in the tactical stock which gives the advantage of an adjustable cheek piece**

**This is great when mounting bigger scopes high above the bore. This rifle also has a 23 3/4" heavy barrel with an unthreaded target crowned muzzle.**

I had wanted to do some experimenting with lighter projectiles after recent successes using a 204 Ruger and this T3 was in 1-12" twist to suit the likes of Sierra's excellent 50 grain BlitzKings.

I could of course have just ordered a T3 in 204 Ruger but being heavily committed to the 223 in components and reloading gear, I couldn't justify the 'cost benefit analysis' so I went

with the cheaper option. The theory was that the extra velocity and reduced muzzle jump would get me some performance improvements over the heavier projectiles in light winds and negate the addition of a suppressor, at least in the interim!

**I have been a fan of the T3s ever since I got my first one; a T3 Tactical 223 with 20" 1-8" twist barrel not long after they became available in NZ.** That gun is approaching 12,000 rounds and still maintains 3/4 MOA or less. Apart from the expected throat erosion, my only issue has been the plastic bolt shroud - I have cracked two - and finally replaced it recently with an aftermarket machined aluminium one. I can put one broken shroud down to

a batch of faulty primers which were softer than usual. The resulting pierced primers caused excessive blast back though the bolt and consequently weakened the shroud. The other fell apart in my fingers when I was de-cocking the bolt.

**The only other complaint I have heard about the T3 is the magazine length and the ongoing fixation of trying to seat 'into the lands'.** I may as well go on record again as saying that with what I would call a high volume varmint gun, feeding and function are more important to me than a possible 1/8 MOA improvement in accuracy. I seat for the magazine length and put my efforts into getting good zeros rather than wearing out the barrel trying to shoot small groups. Been there done that many times over the years!

I have never had a feeding problem with the T3 polymer magazines - and the super slick action and crisp trigger are now the standard by which I compare other rifles. Many of them are agricultural by comparison!

So putting all that logic together, the T3 Super Varmint offered a slick handling, accurate rifle in a stable polymer stock with an adjustable cheek piece. The barrel is heavy enough to reduce harmonics and heat while not being so long as to be awkward to carry in the field.

My next and most common dilemma was what scope to put on it. I had a few ideas with what I had available, as getting a new scope was frankly out of the question! That's when Greg offered me the Burris Eliminator for a trial.

He had already reviewed the Eliminator scope for its use on large animals but I was interested to know if the built-in ballistic computer would be accurate enough on bunnies. There is no denying that it is a large scope, not far off the bulk of a Nightforce NXS but it has the added bonus of a built-in laser range finder. It looked right at home on a heavy barrelled varmint gun but it could take some getting used to on a sleeker sporting rifle for those interested in form over function.



There is the option to zero at either 100 or 200 yards and then enter the drop at 500 yards. The computer should do the rest. A large selection of factory data is provided to get you started. I don't know about the rest of you but zeroing at 500 yards is no easy task and calm cool mornings have been hard to find for months so I had to take my chances in far from ideal conditions, with shimmering heat haze and gusting crosswinds.

I stuck up a target at 510 yards, coated myself in Dimp and tried to concentrate on a wild-arsed guess as to 'hold off'. The range finder function worked fine and being mounted on the rifle, it was more stable than a hand held unit. The remote unit's battery had gone flat probably during Greg's previous field testing but the scope has a button on the left side which activates the laser, giving the range in yards or metres and then the calculated holdover dot. With the built-in inclinometer, this should be the true ballistic range to the target. All pretty impressive and you can see why I started to overlook some of the scope's previous weak points.



It's not an easy scope to review without weighing up the pros and cons as it is neither just a range finder nor only a scope - but a blend of the two - with some obvious compromises that have to be looked at objectively.

Optically, it struggles as a true varmint scope and even though I regularly use magnifications in the 12-14x range, here the lack of parallax adjustment meant a fuzzier image on 12x compared to that available in the likes of Burris's 4.5-14x Fullfield 2s, which come standard with front parallax adjustment.

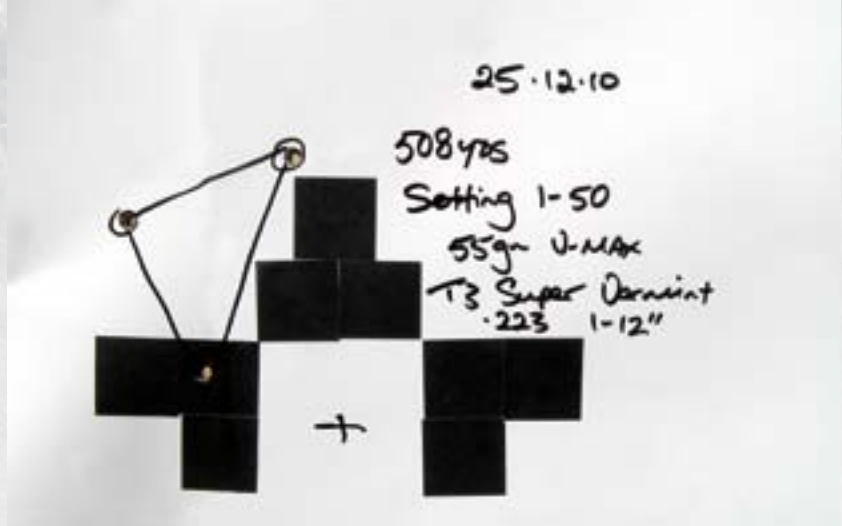


*Christmas Day found me settled behind a Tikka T3 Super Varmint in 223 with a new Burris Eliminator scope, about to fire my first shots at 510 yards. A couple of hawks circled lazily above, while the few rabbits about had sought shelter in the shade of the many scrubby thorn bushes. The only creatures really enjoying themselves were the swarms of sandflies feasting on any bits of skin I had missed with a liberal coating of Dimp!]*



You get 80 seconds once the dot is illuminated, which is probably long enough on a single target but you'll need repeated activations for multiple targets or shots after that time and a scanning function would be nice. I dare say it would suck up the battery pretty quickly though.

The range fluctuated from 508-510 yards on consecutive readings but the holdover didn't shift. This is well within the accuracy of most laser range finders so I held off to the right and zapped off three rounds. Dust erupted from behind the target on the first shot, which was encouraging and at least there would be one hole in the paper to make the walk worthwhile. That first three shot group was just over 4" across and 4" high of the target centre. Well inside minute of deer, goat or similar but a bit high for a hit on a bunny.



Accessing the ballistic programme function was getting easier and I gradually adjusted the 500 yard drop down to calibrate the scope's ballistic drop to actual bullet drop. The closest I got was a 3.5" 3 shot group with a setting of 1-47 (100 yard zero and 47" drop at 500 yards) using the 55gn V-Max load, as the wind was too much for the 50 grainers.

## IN THE FIELD

I'd had enough of shooting paper after a long couple of days running in the new barrel and zeroing. With the weather changing for the worse, I headed off in gusting winds to try out the scope on some steep angle shots. Ranges weren't that far with most less than 300 yards but the angles have played havoc with my mind in the past and this time first round hits were fast and fun. The only thing that let the scope down was the clarity and then the low light ability as the light faded, though the illuminated dot was an excellent aiming mark.



After giving the Eliminator back, I fitted a Leupold 8.5-25x50 LRT to the T3 Varmint

## SUMMARY

Tikka's T3 Super Varmint has all the features we've come to expect from these well built rifles with an accuracy potential well beyond their price range. That doesn't mean I think we should pay more for them - but it's damn good value for money!

The Burris Eliminator Laser scope gives a shooter with a 100 yard zero and some pretty basic abilities the confidence to make hits on larger animals out to, and potentially beyond 500 yards, with much of the data that many of us have had to collate over years of shooting, built into a scope. 🐾

## UPDATE

Later, I changed scopes to a Leupold VX3 8.5-25x with Varmint Hunter reticle and calibrated zeros back to 400 yards with the Sierra 50 grain. Three shot groups stayed well under ¾ MOA and with the refinement of ¼ MOA turrets, fine tuning was easier and hits out to 430 yards were possible.



In better conditions, this T3 certainly could shoot!