



SAVAGE'S WEATHER WARRIOR 16FCSS IN 270WSM

Savage Arms is an American firearms company that has a reputation for producing cleverly designed rifles at a very economical price. I have a bit of a soft spot for Savage rifles as my very first centerfire was a model 99 lever action in 308. I was still at school and had to scrimp and save for months to pay off this rifle and a new Lyman 3x scope at the local sports shop. I must have read too many westerns and had fallen in love with lever actions, but at least I had the sense to choose a very reliable and accurate design, Savage's model 99.

Arthur Savage designed the first revolutionary hammerless lever action in the 1890s, the whole mechanism of which was enclosed in a steel receiver that included a rotary magazine incorporating a cartridge counter to tell you how many rounds you had left. This was the first lever action rifle that gave accuracy comparable to the bolt action rifles of the day. My second-hand 308 model 99 would average MOA accuracy with handloads all day long. I shot my first deer with this rifle - two red hinds in the Middle Hill Hut area of the North Eastern Kawekas. I was so fast with that lever action that the second hind never stood a chance! Anyone who knows Middle Hill will tell you that sika have completely taken over this area now.

From memory I shot half a dozen or so deer with this rifle before I moved along to a more glamorous bolt action. At some stage when I was short of funds to complete another rifle project, I foolishly sold the old Savage but I wish I still had it now.

Savage's 16FCSS Weather Warrior in 270 WSM

Savage make a range of rifles based on their 110 centerfire action, the stainless/composite stocked version is the one they call their Weather Warrior. The 110 action has been reviewed previously, but has some quite different features to other modern bolt actions and we'll go back over those. The cocking piece is a round knob on the side of the bolt body instead of being underneath and the cocking ramp is on top. The sear is a large external bracket in front of the trigger assembly and incorporates the bolt release. The two lug bolt head floats in the front of the bolt body which is a good idea as it self



Left; You can see the unusual cocking piece position in this photo; the round black button protruding from the side of the bolt. The cocking ramp is on top of the bolt.



Above; The AccuTrigger: the hinged skeletonised blade in the centre of the trigger shoe can be seen here. The black lever on the side of the receiver is the bolt release. The almost nonexistent bolt shroud can also be seen.



Above; Loupold's VX-L, a unique solution to mounting height for large objective scopes. This is with medium height rings, but I could even have used low rings for an even better cheek/comb fit.



An unlucky red stag that paused on the edge before disappearing into the big kanuka. A good trigger is essential for shooting, especially if you don't have a good rest. Savage's AccuTrigger allowed me to get off a good shot.

corrects for any misalignment between the action and chamber. There are another two dummy lugs that sit just behind the main lugs whose purpose it is to block off escaping high-pressure gas from a blown primer or ruptured case. The recessed bolt face has a sliding extractor cut into the front of the right-hand lug and the rim is cut away at the bottom to provide controlled round feeding. The handle is right at the rear of the bolt because there is no shroud as such due to the unusual cocking piece position. The tang mounted safety catch is of the three position type. The headspace is set by a large lock nut on the barrel thread in front of the recoil lug and is therefore adjustable unlike most other actions. The 16 FCSS has all stainless metalwork and a detachable box magazine. In the WSM chamberings, this staggered box converts to a single central feed at the top to give reliable chambering with these short fat cartridges which is a good idea.

In 270 WSM, the number 2 contour barrel is 24 inches long and has a 1 in 11 twist. The stock is a plastic composite with blued swivel studs and black pistol grip cap and recoil pad. The action is steel pillar bedded with the barrel floated. The rear action screw is in front of the trigger which I like as there is more bedding surface area here and it provides for a stiffer receiver/stock coupling.

The AccuTrigger

Savage have come up with a unique trigger design to eliminate the problems associated with lighter trigger pulls and US product liability laws. The trigger lever itself has another hinged spring loaded section protruding in the middle that acts as a sear interrupter if the main trigger is accidentally disengaged. This has allowed Savage to safely set the trigger pull to 2 ½ pounds in

this rifle and as low as 1 ½ pounds in some models. The AccuTrigger is adjustable from 1 ½ to 6 pounds, which is a major advancement for accurate shooting.

On the Range

I mounted one of the new Leupold VX-L's, a 4.5-14x50mm, in medium height Burris Signature Zee rings on the Savage. This new idea from Leupold is designed to let you have your cake and eat it too, by allowing you to mount a large objective scope as low as you would a standard model. In fact, I could have used low rings with this scope which would have been about the perfect eye/comb relationship for this rifle. These scopes look very unique with a divot out of the bottom of the objective bell. Leupold say this has not affected their optical performance and I certainly could not detect any differences looking through this scope compared with a normal VX-III 50mm.

I shot the factory 150 grain Fusion ammunition through the Savage and worked up a load in the Federal cases with 140 grain Accubonds seated to just touch, Federal 215 primers and H1000/2217 powder. The Fusion factory ammunition averaged just over an inch while a 72 grain handload bettered that averaging ¾ of an inch with a muzzle velocity of just over 3100 fps. This rifle could handle one more grain of powder but the groups opened up so I settled on the 72 grain load. I was pleased to see that the handload with the 140 grain Accubonds seated to just touch the rifling fitted in the magazine with room to spare. The wrong throat/magazine length relationship is an issue with many of today's short action magnum rifles, potentially compromising accuracy with ammunition seated to fit in the magazine.



Left; Fusion 150 grain factory load, 1.1 inches.

Above; 140 grain Nosler Accubond handload, .7 inches.

Conclusion

The model 16 FCSS can only reinforce Savage's reputation for producing unique, reliable, accurate rifles at an economical price. At an all up weight including scope of just over 8 pounds, this rifle is a good compromise of carry-ability and shoot-ability for the New Zealand hunter. Any heavier and it would become a chore to carry around our mountains, and any lighter and some people would find it too much to handle in this calibre.

I had work to do in the high country and I took the Savage along in case I could squeeze in a hunt. First thing one morning I did just that and caught a red stag returning from his night time feeding just before he disappeared out of waist high scrub into a big valley of dense kanuka. He paused on the edge long enough for me to find a makeshift rest and get away a 250 yard shot. I could only see the top third of the shoulder so aimed at the bottom of that and he collapsed on the spot. Knowing I had probably gone just under the spine, I raced over and gave him another just in case I had only clipped the top of the lungs. The AccuTrigger meant I had been able to get a good shot off even though I didn't have a good rest.

My only complaint about this rifle is its plastic stock; it is just not rigid enough. You would have to be very careful using a bipod that the fore-end did not touch the barrel as you pulled the stock into your shoulder. Savage make other models with walnut and laminated versions, and even one with an H-S Precision fibreglass stock. This last is in a right bolt/left port configuration single shot varmintier which is state of art stuff. I think we're going to see a lot more innovative thinking from Savage in the future.

Specifications

Barrel Length	24 inches
Bare Rifle Weight	6.75 lbs
Magazine Capacity	2 rounds in WSM's
Overall Length	43.75 inches
Metal Finish	matte stainless steel
Stock	black plastic