

The JackStrap

- a helping hand for hunters

by senior correspondent John Dunn



Though it's not always possible, the best place to skin and dress any larger animal intended for the table is to have it hanging on a gambrel.

Apart from being easier on a hunter's or landholder's back, hanging clear of the ground makes the carcass easier to work on, helps keep both the meat and skin clean of debris and untainted by body fluids, and allows the body cavity to drain and the meat to cool out and set properly.

The only drawback to all of the above is that getting a carcass up off the ground can be a major problem in its own right, especially if a hunter is by themselves. A small pulley will always help make the task easier, but even then, tying the haul line off so the carcass hangs where you want it can be difficult, especially if you're trying to do it with one hand while holding the body up with the other.

Tom Barry of Ironbark Tools in Jindabyne, New South Wales, has invented a hand hoist system that makes struggling to hoist a carcass a thing of the past. Called the JackStrap, the device is a lifting system with a multitude of uses that extend its utility way beyond the basic task of making meat. As Tom notes in the letter he sends out with the product, the JackStrap 'has many applications from a general lifter for tradesmen and farmers to a butchering hoist, carcass hoist, calf puller and many others'.

Essentially, the JackStrap is a variation of the chain block system that's been in use industrially and agriculturally for probably centuries. The main difference is that it uses polyester webbing instead of a chain to carry the load, and rollers instead of cogs or pulleys to make the lifting easier.

Each block in the system is made from laser-cut stainless steel plate, which is folded to form a housing and locked to shape by a nut and bolt through the base of each hook. Each block incorporates three rollers made from industrial nylon, mounted on ball

The basic JackStrap is similar in so many ways to the block and tackle we're all familiar with, but uses rollers inside the sheaves instead of cogs. Pulling down on the haul strap on the right raises the load.



The top block of the JackStrap. The aluminium lever just below the hook is the automatic, inertia-operated locking piece. Note how small the hook is, necessitating the use of a small chain or wire to attach it to a beam.

bearings and stainless steel through pins. In the top block, the two top rollers act in unison with the webbing, running over both at the same time. In the bottom block, the bottom pair of rollers does the same. Their combined effect gives the user the advantage of 4:1 lift to make their job easier.

An automatic lift-n-lock locking system is built into the top block to prevent the webbing slipping under load. This is achieved by a series of angled teeth in the underside of the locking lever that only allow the webbing to run one way (clockwise over the top rollers) under load. If it slips and begins to run back, the teeth catch in the serrations on the surface of the webbings and lock it from moving.

The lock is released by taking the weight on the haul strap, then lifting it up at an angle of approximately 75 degrees from vertical to where it engages the tail of the locking lever. This lifts the locking teeth clear of the webbing haul strap, which can then run back through the block to lower the load.

The polyester webbing is UV resistant

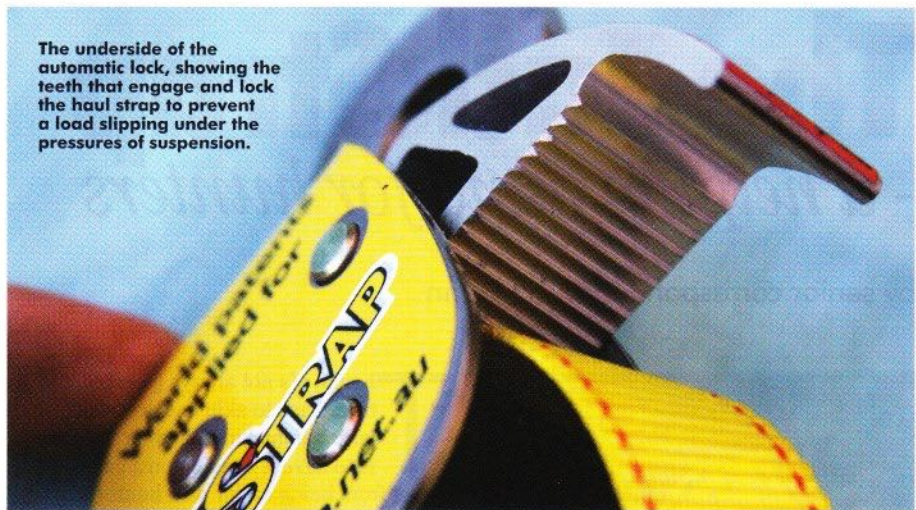
The JackStrap

and does not stretch, making it an ideal material for the lift-n-lock system. It can be removed from the frame for cleaning should it become badly soiled and can be replaced without too many dramas, simply by following the instructions provided. No sewing or stitching is required to hold it in place, as the loose end is secured between a pair of cross arms in the top block. As used in the JackStrap, the webbing is rated to lift a maximum weight of 100kg.

The use of gloves is recommended when handling the webbing straps under load and care needs to be taken that the structure or limb that the JackStrap is to be attached to is strong enough to take the load. These are just a couple of the safety cautions that apply to the product and obviously they need to be considered when using it.

With a weight of around 2.5kg, not many hunters will be prepared to haul a JackStrap around the countryside in their pack. But that's not what it was designed for. It would be much more at home in the toolbox or under the seat of the truck, where it could be retrieved as required. It's provided with a storage bag for just that purpose and is unlikely to suffer damage in such places.

Given that the hooks on either block aren't particularly large, it would be a good idea to throw a few short lengths of chain



The underside of the automatic lock, showing the teeth that engage and lock the haul strap to prevent a load slipping under the pressures of suspension.

and some D-shackles in the bag as well, together with a gambrel. With those available, a small deer, a pig or a goat could be hauled up under a tree and dressed in the paddock. Those who hunt bigger deer such as reds and sambar generally don't have the option of bringing an animal out in one piece. They're simply too big and too heavy for that and breaking them down into portions is really the only way to go. Even so, a JackStrap would be handy in camp, allowing the meat to be hung in a meat safe or bag

away from the attention of the flies and up off the ground away from crawling scavengers.

The JackStrap is a simple, relatively lightweight and very effective piece of kit that many hunters and other users will find useful. With a recommended retail price of less than \$100 including postage to anywhere in Australia, it's a bargain. The product is only available by mail order. For more information, contact Tom Barry at Ironbark Tools on 0438 561 405 or tombar1@bigpond.com ●

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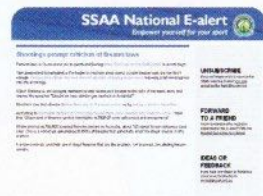
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