

PULSAR
DIGISIGHT
N550

Prices from
£999.95

CONTACT:
Thomas Jacks Ltd,
01789 264100
www.thomasjacks.co.uk

The Future Is Now

At last **Pete Wadeson** gets to test the new Pulsar DigiSight N550 nightvision rifle scope and reckons it's the way forward...



Digital – is this the future of NV technology?

Fast focus ocular, lengthy eye-shade and the generous rubber eye-cup

Digital nightvision first appeared a few years ago and was purely used for observation devices and not gun-mounted. But technology has moved on with the long awaited Pulsar DigiSight N550 finally hitting the streets. The picture created by digital NV is monochrome rather than the familiar green produced by an image intensifier. The reason for the colour change is digital equipment uses a Charge Coupled Device (CCD) to create a sight picture instead of an image intensifier. CCD is the same sort of thing as you get in a digital camera or video. The only difference is that this one is optimised for the infrared spectrum since 70% of light in starlight is IR – cameras etc use CCD's optimised for daylight conditions.

Blocky with buttons

The N550 shows a blocky, polymer body and a confusing array of buttons and controls. However, getting over my initial technophobia took less time than I imagined. Power is supplied by 4 X AA, rechargeable batteries, with a charger included. Run time is around two hours, though it can

also use disposables, which give a shorter duration, but it's worth carrying a set for back-up... There's also a jack for an external power supply; Pulsar at present doesn't supply these, but you can find them in electrical stores and I'm informed they work fine.

I saw four familiar features common to Pulsar NV sights on the right of the unit. The IR illuminator, the focus dial positioned below it and further back what I presumed was the reticule rheostat is in fact the image brightness control. At the rear right top is a two stage lever that turns the sight on and activates the onboard 25mW IR illuminator.

Button, button!

Now time to look to the manual! Firstly I needed a reticule and there are six different options that are selected by the three switches found on the left of the casing. The lower nearest button is the M (MODE). Above this you have two more with arrows on. Press MODE until a circular pair of arrows appears in the top left of

the in-view LCD screen, look through the scope and simply pressing the arrows gives the options.

The covered USB connector is for creating your own reticule or downloading others from the Pulsar website, unfortunately this isn't operational at present. Not that I cared as any of the six suited me and I'm sure you'll feel the same. There are two buttons on top of the unit, one is marked SCR (SCREEN) the other INV (INVERT). Press SCR and you get a full screen reading in the LCD showing battery life, top right, time display (which is on all the time). Press INV and you can change the colour of the reticule from black to white.

Click, click

Mounting consists of a pair of integral claw bases that seem to fit dovetails of up to an inch. Though you might need a bridge adaptor for multi-shots due to the magazine dimensions. For certain firearms you might also require a dedicated rail. At the rear is a fast-focus eye piece with extended rubber bellows. To zero; remove the cover on the left of the unit to reveal a single dial. This alters both



N550 rigged up on BSA SuperTEN; it looks a bit bigger than some NV but is quite light due to its polymer body

windage and elevation. Once switched on - pushing in on the centre knob brings up a double opposing vertical arrow in the top left hand corner of the display. This denotes elevation mode, then just dial to suit. Push the button again to select windage and repeat. Click values, which is probably not the correct term, as the reticule is electrically generated give a movement of 20mm @ 100meters.

Unlike tubed NV the 550 can be safely used in daylight, though the objective shows an integral, hinged lens cover, which just keeps the dirt/rain out. Being digital means you can easily zero in normal lighting conditions or at night and there's even a one-shot zero facility. Go into MODE until a bullet symbol appears in the top left of the screen and take a shot. Then adjust the windage/elevation dial and a second (ghost) reticule can be moved to place that over the point of impact. Come out of that and you are left with one cross hair in the screen and your zero set. However, it won't be central in the sight picture but off course you could use this as a quick reference point to see how far off the target you are.

Better or worse?

The scope performed well beyond my expectation. The N550 works superbly giving a bright, sharp, light grey, oblong sight picture and with the integral IR on will detect rabbits at 100 yds. Impressive performance indeed,



On the top are the screen and invert buttons that changes the colour of the reticule - note main ON/OFF operation dial on the lower right

though there's a Weaver rail front left to fit an extra IR if required. I used a 150mW IR that Thomas Jacks are discounting and putting it with the unit as an up-grade option. Using this I had no trouble spotting and identifying fox- sized targets out to 350 yds. So, if you're shooting ability is up to it this unit will allow engagement ranges of up to 150/175-yds.

If you want more detection range then fit the optional LaserLuch's high power IR torch which boosts your range on fox size targets out to over 400-yds depending on ambient light. This means you've got a Gen 1 priced unit easily giving the equivalent of Gen 2+ performance. I was impressed at how well the N550 performed and it will doubtless appeal to all night hunters regardless of gun type or quarry; especially at the price! With a three



There are six, on-board reticule options, plus you will be able to download or create your own too



View from the left showing windage/elevation dial and the Mode button to access other functions - note the Weaver rail to facilitate fitting an extra IR illuminator

year guarantee on the sight, two for the batteries and charger and factor in the cost and it looks like a good bet...

Digital nightvision technology has now come of age and from my view certainly proved itself; what next I wonder?

{ TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS }

- Model Pulsar DigiSight N550**
- Magnification x4.5
- Objective 50mm
- FOV @ 100m 5.5m
- Maximum Detection Distance 600m
- Closest Focus 5m
- Dimensions 340 x 95 x 94mm
- Weight 1Kg
- Price £999.95 including remote, rechargeable batteries, smart charger and carry case
- £1079 for the above plus IR940 150mW IR Illuminator
- Contact: Thomas Jacks Ltd, 01789 264100
- www.thomasjacks.co.uk

↑ FOR
Price and performance looks good

↓ AGAINST
Could do with a higher magnification option

→ VERDICT
Seems to be the NV unit we have all been waiting for...