

Protect & Serve



CENS Hunter electronic ear defenders are a compact and practical solution to hearing protection and acuity in the field. By comparison a set of the conventional Peltor Pro-Tac active muffs



Pete Moore gets his ears on as he tests the versatile and effective CENS ear defenders especially made with the riflemen in mind

Hearing loss due to high intensity sound damage is both cumulative and also irreversible and that's a plain fact! For range work a set of ear defenders (normally muffs) is mandatory, but for we hunters is it worth the effort? A shot here and a shot there; surely that can't do much damage? If so the hassle of wearing something is not worth consideration; well I'll tell you now it is!

To be honest I have tried muffs when out hunting and they are a pain; even the electronic ones. Likewise plug-ins; certainly more discrete but you get a horrible sense of isolation and loss of audible acuity, which can be very important. So is there an answer? Well I now know there is in the form of CENS Hunter electronic ear defenders from Puretone Ltd.

Neat and discreet

Our resident shotgunner Mark Stone tested the CENS Flex 2s and has been wearing them ever since, which has to tell you something! So I was pleased when Martin Dickman (Puretone) rang me and asked if I would like to try a set more aimed at the rifleman.

Called the Hunter they are near identical though have been slightly re-designed with specific programmes for the needs of a rifle shooter.

Being an 'internal' system they have to take a moulding of your inner ear to make the rubber insert. This accepts the electronic (active) modules and is all rather discreet, which is nice. Also provided are a set of passive (solid) modules with an in-line filter that simply blocks the sound waves getting through. The plugs are coloured; red - right and blue - left.

The active system runs on a tiny 312 battery with Puertone recommending the Rayovac brand. The cells fit in swing-out shelves, run time is quoted at between 100-150-hours depending on sound level selected.

Controls consist of a 3-position, rotary ON/OFF and volume switch; black is off, green medium and red high gain. Generally most people with average hearing will find green the normal setting; increasing the volume is more for those with poor hearing and will act more like an

Each set comes with active as well as passive inserts for the ear piece and hard and soft cases



aid. Above this is the programme (P) button, which on this model offers two settings - P1 is a general purpose setting with a high compression ratio to accommodate long term and high level gunfire as you would find on a rifle range.

P2 offers a modified response to decrease wind noise (where applicable) yet without losing acuity in terms of being able to hear noises such as animal cries, wing beats, foot falls etc. In this they act like an improved ear and as we shall see really work!

Professional product

The Hunters indicate which programme by beeping when it's selected – P1 (single beep) - P2 (double beep). As with any active ear defender the CENS allows normal conversation with improved hearing, but will shut down in 0.009 seconds, which to us is near instantaneous...

The standard packaging is impressive with a cleaning brush, ring of spare batteries, hard and soft cases warranty cards (for both electronic modules) and a small sachet of MiraCell Pro-Ear. There is also deluxe kit with more batteries, a dehumidifier system, cleaning wipes and pen. Puretone recommends that you clean the CENS once a month and return them once a year for a check/service.

Too loud?

From the off I found the Hunters very comfortable and easy to fit and after a few minutes in the ear you almost forget they are there. What I initially found difficult was adjusting the volume. The rotary switches are slotted on top so all you do is place your finger on them and turn gently, this was soon mastered.

When I first used them I had them up at maximum and boy do they amplify every noise you hear or make; hence the previous comment about them acting as hearing aids when past the green setting. Even when static this is far too much as the slightest movement sounds ultra loud. It occurred to me that if animals have hearing that is at least double or treble the ability of ours then they must hear every hunter coming; despite how quite we think we are. A sobering thought!

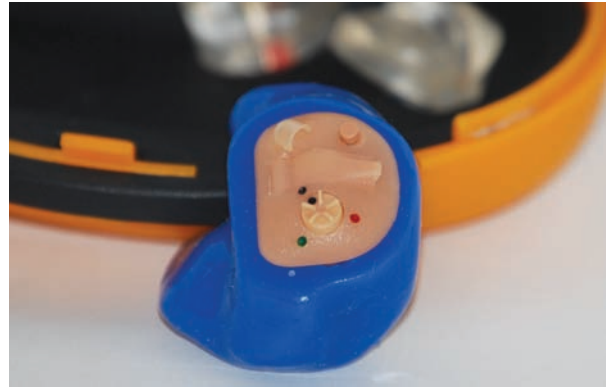
I found the best setting for general use is around the middle (green), with P2 selected for hunting,

here you pick up a lot of noise but do not hear too much of your own. This was brought home to me in a high seat. I had my shotgun loaded up with BB just in case a fox came in close along with my 6.5 Grendel for deer and longer range Charlies.

Sitting there I suddenly heard a flapping stamping noise and spinning round I saw 40-yards up the track a young fox attacking a guinea fowl. Bizarrely the Charlie came off worst as the bird suddenly turned round, spread its wings and attacked him and he turned tail and fled. To be honest I don't think I would have picked up on that sound so well if I had been using just my Mk 1 ear!

Boom, boom

With the advantages of what are to all intents and purposes a set of new, high power ears I went to the range. Switching to P1 calibres like 12-gauge and 375 Ruger, which generate a fair bit of noise, were instantly quelled by the CENS, so they definitely work on that front too. The only thing I did find when up another high seat in a big open field was wind noise became a problem. The P2 programme does to a degree help, but some form of wind sock is also needed, as you find on active muffs.



I could see no solution as there is nowhere to put such a fixture.

I mentioned this to Martin and he said they had a solution in the form of their Digital Wind Shields. They are felt-like pouches that actually go over the ear. Inside is a sprung steel ring, which is flexed out to fit then pushed back where it keeps them in position. They do make a difference too and cut down a lot of that white noise, plus when it's cold they keep your 'waz valves' nice and warm. Problem solved...

I have been using the Hunters for a few months now and their ability to provide 100% hearing protection and audible acuity well above what I can normally hear is most welcome.

I now no longer risk gun shots damaging my hearing when out hunting, nor the potential danger of not hearing a range command

