

IN THE DOGHOUSE

Robin goes on the hunt for a new kennel and finds what he's looking for...inside a cardboard box.



Three very contented inmates.

If you think picking the right gun is a hard enough ask, what about dog kennels? As I discovered it's not easy - there's a bewildering range to choose from out there.

The search for something to replace a flimsy weld mesh run tacked onto a brick-built outhouse in the yard has taken me more than a year, a year spent traipsing back and forth at game fairs to look at the options, not to mention countless hours checking everything out on the web.

Some of the stuff I found was only marginally better than the kennel and run I was trying to replace so those could be rejected straight away. Others though were made from altogether better stuff while a number of Fort Knox look-alikes bust my budget by a mile.

In the end I whittled three possibilities down to one and was



From this to this



CHEGWORTH PRICES
Single run £1999, double £3102, treble £3995.
Price includes VAT as well as delivery and erection in mainland England. A final coat of marine based sealer/treater is applied after the kennel has been erected.

about to pick up the phone and place an order when a chunky parcel turned up out of the blue at the office. Thanks to Forsham Cottage Ark's 'Check the Spec' box the whole project ended up back in the melting pot...

I vaguely recalled that this Kent-based company made poultry runs, dove-cotes and floating duck houses. I also knew it makes and distributes the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust's excellent mink raft. What I didn't know was that it also does a range of dog kennels.

But back to the box. As clever marketing goes, it takes some beating.

Inside was a cross sectional sample of every constituent part that goes into Forsham's flagship kennel, The Chegworth. And the quality was obvious: four inch deep polystyrene insulation sandwiched between 3/4in tongue and grooved shiplap cladding on the outside, tough 1/4in chew proof stock boarding inside. Heavy duty, seasoned and pressure treated Scandinavian Redwood pine for the walls and the rafters and for the run you could take your choice from galvanised panels carrying

weld mesh or full length tubular bar. For the roof pick between corrugated tin or onduline.

If I was looking for a solidly built kennel, this was it.

CHOICES, CHOICES

On paper the Chegworth was more expensive than the other kennel by about £500 but I really liked the look of it and the more I weighed one up against the other the better the Forsham actually fared.

For instance the materials used were heavier duty and better quality, metalwork and welding was sturdier with a superior finish and all edges carried metal anti-chew strips.

On finish and specification alone the Chegworth was winning me over but the real clincher was that delivery and erection was included in the price. The other maker charged that out as a fairly hefty extra. Decision made!

The Chegworth is built as a single, double or triple run kennel in the form that appears on the website but Forsham also make bespoke kennels to customer requirements.

The only 'non-standard' change

I wanted was to have guttering as well as doors installed in the dividing wall so that I could turn two single runs into one large one for the dogs to find shade or sunshine during the day. In the event of having to kennel friends' dogs during holidays the kennel can quickly revert to two single runs.

After talking through my requirements - and before placing an order - Forsham's design team worked up a series of really useful computer generated drawings to show how everything was put together, along with exact dimensions. Cushty...

OH, AND ANOTHER THING

Dean Eley, managing director of Forsham Cottage Arks is a mad keen shooter who runs a number of spaniels and Labradors. He designed the kennels to meet his own requirements as a practical working dog owner.

Dean's particularly pleased with the dog den he fits to the Chegworth - it's roomy, fully insulated and completely lined with indestructible stock board and anti-chew strips which can be

blasted clean with a power washer.

Best of all the front and top folds up against the back wall while the bed floor stays down for day and summer use. However the base, too, folds away within seconds when the time comes to give the entire kennel a thorough blast out with water and disinfectant.

As mentioned already he makes mink rafts for the GWCT but he also builds an amazingly effective live crow trap to his own design as well as Larsen traps and rat traps. You can view these - and the kennels - at this year's CLA and Midland Game Fairs. **SG**

SPORTING GUN INFO

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THE BUILD



1 All ready to go. But which bit goes where...?



2 Deano Eley and Bradley Glover start with the walls.



3 Then it's time to sort out the actual 'prison cells'.



4 And now for the roof rafters and trusses...



5 The unique fold-away box, and note the ply roof lining.



6 Dean (snr) applies a marine sealer to the woodwork...



7 ...before hosing down the roof to check the guttering.



8 The finished article - all it needs now are dogs.

Robyn Macgregor/Robyn Macgregor