

# Pretty Darn Slick!<sup>65</sup>

## Dillon's HP1 Electronic Hearing Protectors

By Serena Wood

When I began shooting, I wasn't exactly sure what I would need – besides the gun and ammo, of course. In the interest of preserving my hearing I decided to pick up a pair of earmuffs. They were just a cheap pair from a local sporting goods store to get me going. Eventually I heard about electronic earmuffs that would amplify the softer noises that my current pair would muffle while still protecting my ears from harmful loud noises. No more having to lip-read at the range? Sign me up! Needless to say, I flipped through a Dillon catalog to see what they offered and ordered the HP1 Electronic Hearing Protectors.

Upon opening the box I was pleasantly surprised to find batteries included in the package, allowing me to try the earmuffs out immediately. On that note, the HP1s use four common AAA batteries, two on each muff, so there's no need to worry about trying to track down

expensive specialty batteries. With an estimated life of 250 hours, changing the batteries isn't something you'll have to worry about very often, but when the time comes it's a simple process. A small flat-head screwdriver is all you need to open the battery compartments, which are conveniently located on the outsides of the muffs – no need to remove the ear cushions for access as on some other designs – and the batteries pop right out. An added benefit of these external compartments is that the batteries and electronic connections are protected from the warm, moist environment that can occur inside the ear cups.

These hearing protectors are lightweight – much more so than I expected from an electronic pair – and compact. When folded, they're about the size of a large orange, taking up much less space in my range bag than my old pair of non-collapsible ear muffs. They're very comfortable to wear and don't pinch my head the way my other set did.

I found the Dillon HP1 Electronic Hearing Protectors to be a great alternative to conventional earmuffs. Unlike their non-electronic counterparts, which muffle all sounds, the HP1s allow the wearer to hear background noise and carry on a conversation. When the microphones are turned on, they amplify these soft sounds while

actively muffling louder sounds such as gunfire. This is especially advantageous while shooting a match or anywhere else the shooter needs to be able to hear range commands. A high-quality sound is transmitted at all times the muffs are turned on, not the obnoxious buzzing noise often heard in other electronic earmuffs.

The HP1s have a NRR (Noise Reduction Rating) of 21, and wearing earplugs underneath can increase that number. With the volume turned up, the wearer can still carry on a conversation while enjoying extra hearing protection. I'm still a bit

sensitive to range sounds so this little trick came in handy for me.

Each ear cup has a separate volume adjustment knob and they rotate in opposite directions. While this design is a bit more complex than some of the cheaper styles, it reduces bulk and eliminates having a wire running between the two muffs. Unlike some electronic earmuffs



on the market that have only one microphone transmitting sound to both sides, the HP1s have a separate microphone on each side, making them stereophonic and keeping sound natural and directional, i.e. you can tell from which direction a noise is coming. The HP1s are designed to amplify soft noises while *simultaneously* muffling loud noises, thereby avoiding the annoying effect of sound cutting in and out often noticed in cheap electronic earmuffs. This allows the wearer to continue a conversation while shooting, a huge plus for novice shooters receiving range instruction.

As with the Dillon Range Bag I tested last year, the HP1 Electronic Hearing Protectors are well-designed and built to last. The sound transmission is excellent, the construction and quality of materials are top-notch, and I expect to get many years of use out of them. They do come with a one-year warranty, just in case, though I don't foresee any issues with mine. The folks at Dillon Precision are even nice enough to include a pair of replacement microphone covers in the box. If you need to replace them again, you can find them in the catalog or online for only \$5 a pair. You can also order replacement ear cushions for a reasonable \$10 per pair – not a bad deal, if you ask me. Overall, the HP1s are pretty darn slick and I'm very happy to have them in my bag.

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