



Kahles Helia RD series: Breaking the mould

By Chris Blatherwick

Mail call at the *On Target Africa* office is the highlight of the week for everyone. Besides the normal items, we sometimes receive an unexpected package from our firearm dealer network. Any package from The Powder Keg piques my interest immediately, as that can only mean one thing: It is Kahles time! When we opened the carefully-wrapped package, I was taken aback at its content, as it was not a traditional Kahles product, but rather the start of a new path for this optical sighting system giant.

As a student of psychology, I thought it fitting to ascertain the reactions of ten test subjects by means of a word association test. I simply asked our respondents to reply with the first word that came to mind immediately upon hearing the name Kahles. The responses varied from quality to best, scope, imported, hunting, innovative, oldest, as well as expensive and long-range.

Kahles is known for producing high-quality variable magnification optical sighting systems for the hunting and long-range fraternity. This year it designed and produced its first-ever red dot optical sighting system, the multi-platform Helia RD.

Pioneering innovation

Kahles designed and produced the first-ever optic featuring ballistic drop compensation in 1904. The company pioneered the first variable power scope in 1949, followed by the first waterproof optic, sealed with O rings, in 1960. It also introduced the first multi-coated rifle optic capable of more than 90% light transmission in 1972.

Johann Peternal took over from Frederick Kahles as CEO in the late 1980s, pushing the envelope for innovative optic designs, and introducing its centenary Helia C series. Robert Artwohl was tasked with establishing Kahles's production facility in Guntramsdorf, thus moving the company away from its base in Vienna.

Optical advancements

The state-of-the-art, world-class facility not only increased production capacity, but allowed for further

optical advancements. In 2005, Kahles introduced its innovative multi-zero TM ballistics elevation adjustment, hailing a new era in precision shooting. However, Kahles did not stop there, and developed the Automatic Light – the first smart on-off mechanism for illuminated rifle scope reticles.

John F. Kennedy said: "Conformity is the jailer of freedom and the enemy of growth." I could not agree more with this profound statement. Kahles took the road less travelled when it designed

the Helia RD red dot. Traditionally, red dot optical sighting systems were designed for exclusive use within the sports-shooting and self-defence realms.

From African plains to urban jungle

Kahles identified the need for a red dot optical sighting system that would not merely meet the requirements of sports-shooters and EDC practitioners, but excel as a hunting optical sighting system at home either on the African plains or in the urban jungle.

The Helia RD red dot sighting system is made from a single piece of aircraft-grade aluminium, and finished with a hard anodised matte black

finish that is lightweight and compact. You get Kahles's regular multi-coated lens as well – something you would probably come to expect in a high-end red dot, with no parallax to contend with, and a very cleverly managed fluctuation in the colour of the target area. This is actually what multi-coated lenses should do, and what is often overlooked by manufacturers.

Unique design

The unique design of the Helia RD lends makes it perfect as a multi-platform red dot sighting system suitable for a large variety of weapon platforms, ranging from high-power hunting rifles to handguns, and everything in-between. The Helia RD is powered by a single CR2032 battery. The battery tray is on the right for ease of access, and does not require any special tools to change the battery.

Automatic Light is a smart battery on-off system.

Kahles's smart battery on-off system called Automatic Light is based on a motion sensor. After being motionless for three minutes, the red dot enters standby mode. Here the smallest movement is sufficient to reactivate the red dot in a fraction of a second, with the last selected brightness level. After four hours of inactivity, the red dot switches off completely.

Battery-saving technology

Kahles does not specify the battery life of the Helia RD. However, when we look at the two-stage battery-saving technology incorporated in the

design, we are confident that the battery life is not only on par with, but should eclipse that achieved by other red dot sighting systems.

The Helia RD's illumination controls are on the left. The controls are incredibly tactile and easy to manipulate. Depressing the 'up' indicator increases the intensity level of the 2 MOA red dot. The Helia RD is shock- and waterproof, with heavy-duty O ring seals preventing moisture as well as dust and debris from penetrating, thus ensuring reliable performance in all possible conditions.

The Helia RD series is ideal for multiple mounting options.

Two models

The Helia RD is available in two different models: The 20018 (mounting options are solely Picatinny-based), and the 20019 (which includes an adaptor plate for optic-ready pistol platforms). This means the Helia RD series is therefore ideal for multiple mounting options.

For our first range evaluation, we thought that we would introduce a new accessory to our *On Target Africa* evaluation array. The CAA Micro Roni Gen 3 has gained a cult following among sports-shooters and self-defence aficionados. This cost-effective pistol conversion kit transforms a handgun platform into a shoulder-fired pistol carbine in mere minutes. Our Gen 4 GLOCK 17 and 19 would play pivotal roles in our evaluations, although in different guises.

In the box

We dropped our GLOCK 19 into our Micro Roni chassis, and pulled the Helia RD 20018 closer. The box housed the Helia RD, Picatinny rail adaptor and protective silicone cover (also finished in Kahles's vibrant orange) that incorporates a spare CR2032 battery compartment and an array of hex keys. Assembling the Helia RD 20018 took less than 30 seconds, merely requiring two hex screws to attach the Picatinny mounting plate to the Helia RD (it is advised to apply blue Loctite to the screw threads). The Picatinny adaptor plate was secured to the Micro Roni's Picatinny rail via a 4 mm hex screw. Full installation was completed in a tad over two minutes. The Helia RD 20018 looked right at home on our pistol-to-carbine conversion kit.

A worthy multi-platform red dot optical sighting system.

The red dot is activated by depressing either the positive or negative illumination controls on the left of the Helia RD. The 2 MOA dot is crisp, with no signs of starbursting. We loaded our GLOCK 19 with 15 rounds of 115 gr Sellier & Bellot ammunition, and set about putting the Kahles on paper to effect the necessary windage and elevation adjustments. Our initial zeroing took place at the 10 m mark, and only took a few shots, after which I stretched it out to 25 m.



Design overview and specifications

Aspects	Helia RD 20018	Helia RD20019
Make	Kahles	Kahles
Model	Helia RD 20018	Helia RD 20019
Style	Reflex	Reflex
Magnification	1	1
Sight window	26 x 22 mm	26 x 22 mm
Reticle	Dot	Dot
Dot size	2 MOA	2 MOA
Eye relief	Unlimited	Unlimited
Height	32 mm	32 mm
Width	28 mm	28 mm
Weight	42 g	42 g
Adjustment graduation	1 MOA	1 MOA
Max elevation adjustment	160 MOA	160 MOA
Max windage adjustment	120 MOA	120 MOA
Parallax setting	Parallax free	Parallax free
Battery	CR2032	CR2032
Battery extender	Yes; two-stage	Yes; two-stage
Base	Picatinny adaptor mount	Proprietary Kahles pistol adaptor plate
Warranty period	2 years	2 years
Applications	Hunting, sports-shooting and self-defence	Hunting, sports-shooting and self-defence

Flawless performance

The Helia RD 20018 performed flawlessly, and proved its worth as a multi-platform red dot optical sighting system. Apart from the impressively broad field of view, the glass is crystal clear. The dot was very easy to find during our different drills.

Rapid target acquisition for follow-up shots was fast and straightforward. Yes, my groups opened when we conducted some rapid-fire drills, but at 25 m, our groupings were still under 50 mm, so I was pleased with the overall performance.

For our second range evaluation, we called upon the services of our Jonker & Sons GLOCK 17 Gen 4 MOS derivative, with optics cut to test the ability and functionality of the Kahles Helia RD 20019, developed for sports-sporting and EDC.





KAHLES

FOLLOW YOUR INTUITION

HELIA RD – designed for driven hunt

The unique Anti-Reflexion coating makes viewing so comfortable, you only see dot and target – and nothing else.



NEW

HELIA RD



60 Hendrik Potgieter Road, Florida North, Gauteng
South Africa. Telephone +27 (0) 11472 1721/2
Email sales@powderkeg.co.za
www.powderkeg.co.za

kahles.at

It utilises GLOCK's Number 5 adaptor plate as the basis that the RD attaches to. However, unlike other optical sighting systems on the market, it requires a secondary 2 mm hard anodised adaptor plate (supplied with the Helia RD 20019) to marry the optic with the Number 5 adaptor plate.

Right at home

The Helia RD 20019 looked right at home – or, more accurately, intimidating – on our GLOCK 17 MOS. It undoubtedly gives end users the edge on moving targets, due in large part to the field of view being so wide, which means tracking targets more quickly, as the housing does not cut off essential lines of sight. The housing is rounded instead of rectangular. It plays a major role in that broader field of view, but has other benefits, too.

Even though the Helia RD is technically bigger and takes up more real estate than other red dots, the lack of corners makes for a snag-free design. Visually it feels more natural to look through a rounded instead of a rectangular-shaped lens. Although we did not beat the Helia RD with a hammer, or throw it on a slab of concrete, we are not exactly gentle with our test platforms. During our evaluation, we racked the slide off two separate barricades, exerting enormous stress on the hood and base of our test platform. The Helia RD just shrugged it off, and kept zero during the duration of our evaluation session.

Standby mode

The Automatic Light battery-saving technology intrigued me. I holstered our GLOCK 17, fitted with the Helia RD 20019, and waited for the optical sighting system to go into standby. True to form, this mode was engaged after exactly 180 seconds of no gyroscopic movement. The optic reactivated in a split-second after any motion or movement is detected. In addition, the intensity level was exactly what it was prior to standby.

In conclusion

Charles Darwin is known for his theory of evolution, based on the fact that species change over time, and give rise to new species, all sharing a common ancestor. Kahles conforms perfectly to Darwin's theory. It has always been at the forefront of optical sighting system design, construction and, most importantly, innovation. Now it has evolved yet again with its Helia RD series.

There has been a paradigm shift within the local and international shooting community with regard to rifle, shotgun, and handgun sighting systems. End users are now scrutinising aspects such as versatility and ease-of-use, as well as overall performance.

Multi-tool

The humble red dot sighting system is the multi-tool of the firearm community, equally at home on either large-calibre hunting rifles for hunting dangerous game, on shotgun platforms for hunting or

sports-shooting, and last but by no means least, it is rapidly becoming the go-to optical sighting solution for EDC handgun aficionados.

Kahles has included critical design elements such as a large sight window, incorporated two forms of battery-saving technology, and easy access to the battery tray, prominent illumination controls, and various mounting options. Is the Helia RD a MIL SPEC battlefield optic? No, it was not designed for such an environment or application. Does the end user have to worry about its robustness? Not at all. The Helia RD was designed as a multi-purpose red dot optical sighting system equally at home on large-calibre dangerous game rifles or self-defence pistol platforms. ☺



The Kahles Helia RD series, and the full Kahles range of optical sighting systems are available from

The Powder Keg of Roodepoort, Gauteng.*

*Price available upon request.

www.powderkeg.co.za

The "One-Stop-Shop" for all your firearm needs:

Contact us on 086 1111 220 or visit us at Unit 1B, 12 Planken Street, Stellenbosch

Tantus Trading 103

POCONEX Training

LEGALLY
YOUR LICENCE IN OUR SIGHTS
U LISENSIE IN ONS VISIER
ARMED
WESTERN CAPE

AIM
INDOOR SHOOTING RANGE

- Indoor Shooting Range
- Registered Firearm Dealer
- Proficiency Training
- Professional administration of applications
- Appeals - refused licences
- Deceased estate firearms
- Buy and Sell Second hand firearms
- Self-defence and Tactical training
- Practical shooting skills
- Provincial Hunting licence for sale