

Taffin TESTS

By John Taffin

FACTORY HEAVYWEIGHT HUNTING LOADS FOR HANDGUNNERS



Hot loaded
.45 Colt
ammo should
only be fired
in modern
sixguns like
this Ruger
Bisley.



Twenty years ago it was impossible to find a true big game hunting load for use in any of the big bore sixguns. Sixgunners who did not handload had no choice except hollowpoints, not an especially good bullet style for handgun hunting. It was about this time that I met two men who were to become special friends. Both were assembling true hunting loads by using heavyweight hard cast bullets.

Our handgun hunting editor J.D. Jones had just formed SSK Industries to cater to the handgun hunter with bullet moulds and custom handguns. Even he did not know at the time what he had tapped into. Today, to name but a few things, SSK provides premium custom hunting handguns as well as Arrestor muzzle brakes, T'SOB scope mounts and a whole array of efficient wildcat cartridges in custom barrels for the T/C Contender, Encore and XP-100 single shot pistols.

Early on, Jones designed heavyweight cast bullets for use in his wildcat .430 JDJ in the Contender. His 320 gr. flatnose .44 bullet proved to be just the ticket for .44 Magnum sixguns for hunting. A standard loading of 1,300 fps was soon

assembled by sixgunners all over the country. Later came the 340 gr. FN .45 bullet, primarily for use in the .454 Casull. Cast hard, both of these bullets were designed for optimum penetration on really big game.

In 1971 Ruger brought forth the first sixgun capable of handling heavy .45 Colt loads. Jim Taylor, now the pistol packin' pastor and staff writer for *Gun Week*, was presented with an early Ruger .45 Blackhawk by his dad. They settled on a heavy load using 300 gr. hard cast .45-70 bullets sized to .452" and loaded over 18.5 grs. of #2400 for around 1,200 fps.

After 25,000 rounds, Taylor's .45 Blackhawk had to be rebuilt. John Linebaugh installed a new cylinder and barrel and it is ready for another 25,000 heavy cast bullet rounds.

Bullet mould makers finally discovered the market for heavyweight sixgun bullets for those who cast their own. Those who didn't were still out of luck. Finally, in the past few years, the ammunition manufacturers have started to offer premium quality heavyweight bullets for handgun hunters.

Two of the first to do so were Cor-Bon

and Garrett Cartridges. They are now joined by most of the major manufacturers as well as some of the smaller ones in offering excellent hunting loads.

Big Game

For hunting small game, any good hollowpoint in practically any caliber will suffice. When it comes to those animals classified as big game, there is big and then there is *big*. The latter is anything over 200 lbs. For small deer, mountain lion, javelina and pronghorn, I normally use a JHP with one of my favorite loads being Black Hills .44 Magnum loaded with a Hornady 240 gr. XTP. This load has cleanly taken several whitetail, as well as cougar, turkey and javelina, all with one shot. I use it only on this sized animal and only with broadside lung/heart shots except for the turkey which requires a bullet placed at the juncture of the neck and body.

For really big game, beginning with large feral hogs, the key is penetration. Big animals have tough muscles and strong bones; hollowpoint bullets cannot be counted on to make it past either one.

When it comes to factory loaded sixgun cartridges, there are only four that are suited for use on really big game, with one of these probably being marginal. Handgun hunting with a revolver should only be attempted by experienced handgun hunters with the patience to carefully—very carefully—place their shot.

The best chamberings are .44 Magnum, .45 Colt, and .454 Casull. The .41 Magnum is marginal and certainly not for the big ones that bite back. A fifth that I will cover here (for those who use it) is the .357 Magnum.

I will not become embroiled in the argument as to whether or not the .357 Magnum is for big game. Suffice it to say that I will not use it on anything over 100 lbs. when there are so many other better choices.

Let's look at what is available in these five chamberings. All muzzle velocities

were recorded using an Oehler Model 35P and all were taken with a 7½" barrel except the .41 Magnum loads which were run through a 10" barrel.

Loads for the .41 Magnum are a good news/bad news proposition. The good news is that both Cor-Bon and Federal have hard cast heavy bullet loads at 265 grs. and 250 grs. respectively. The bad news is that most barrel twists on .41 Magnum sixguns are too slow to stabilize heavyweight bullets.

Both my Ruger Bisley and Smith & Wesson Model 57 do wonderfully well with 220 gr. hard cast bullets and I have taken both whitetail deer and feral hogs with this bullet at 1,500 fps. However, they are a lost cause with heavyweight bullets.

Dan Wesson's .41 Magnum has the proper twist to stabilize heavy bullets and the latest offering from Freedom Arms is a .41 Magnum with a 1:14 twist, allowing real accuracy with heavyweight bullets. From the 10" Freedom Arms .41, Cor-Bon's load does 1,400 fps while the slightly lighter weight Federal round clips along at 1,300. Either should be chosen for deepest penetration with the .41 Magnum.

The time is long past when a handgunner could just grab a box of ammo and go hunting. Every hunter, whether rifleman or handgunner, should strive for the quickest, cleanest kill. These loads—coupled with patience and careful bullet placement—will help tremendously in achieving this goal.



How To Find Them

Black Hills

P.O. Box 3090
Rapid City, SD 57709
(605) 348-5150

Buffalo Bore Ammunition

P.O. Box 78
Carmen, ID 83462
(916) 797-1866

Cor-Bon

1311 Industry Rd.
Sturgis, SD 57785
(800) 626-7266

Federal Cartridge

900 Ehlen Dr.
Anoka, MN 55303
(612) 323-2300

Garrett Cartridges

P.O. Box 178
Chehalis, WA 98532
(206) 736-0702

Hornady

P.O. Box 1848
Grand Island, NE 68802
(800) 338-3220

Speer

P.O. Box 856
Lewiston, ID 83501
(800) 627-3640

Winchester

427 N. Shamrock
Alton, IL 62024
(618) 258-3566



Factory Heavyweight Hunting Loads

Manufacturer Bullet Velocity

Federal	180 gr. hard cast	1,275 fps
Winchester	180 gr. Partition Gold	1,275 fps
Cor-Bon*	180 gr. Hornady XTP	1,560 fps
Cor-Bon*	180 gr. bonded core	1,600 fps
Cor-Bon*	200 gr. hard cast	1,480 fps

*For use in Freedom Arms Model 83 five-shot revolver only.

Federal	250 gr. hard cast	1,300 fps
Cor-Bon	265 gr. hard cast	1,400 fps

Garrett	310 gr. hard cast	1,275 fps
Federal	300 gr. JFP	1,280 fps
Winchester	260 gr. Partition Gold	1,400 fps
Speer	270 gr. Gold Dot	1,350 fps
Buffalo Bore	300 gr. Speer JFP	1,400 fps
Buffalo Bore	305 gr. LBT LFN	1,400 fps
Black Hills*	300 gr. Hornady XTP	1,200 fps
Black Hills*	320 gr. hard cast	1,200 fps
Cor-Bon*	300 gr. Hornady XTP	1,240 fps
Cor-Bon	260 gr. bonded core	1,500 fps
Cor-Bon	280 gr. bonded core	1,365 fps
Cor-Bon	305 gr. Penetrator	1,250 fps
Cor-Bon	300 gr. JSP	1,370 fps
Cor-Bon	320 gr. hard cast	1,275 fps

*Special "reduced recoil" (read: reduced velocity) loads.

Buffalo Bore	300 gr. Speer FP	1,325 fps
Buffalo Bore	300 gr. LBT WFN	1,325 fps
Cor-Bon	300 gr. bonded core	1,300 fps
Cor-Bon	300 gr. JFP	1,300 fps

All of these .45 Colt loads are for modern sixguns like Ruger, Freedom Arms, etc. Do not shoot in Colts or Italian replicas!

Winchester	260 gr. JFP	1,880 fps
Winchester	300 gr. JFP	1,670 fps
Cor-Bon	265 gr. bonded core	1,650 fps
Cor-Bon	285 gr. bonded core	1,600 fps
Cor-Bon	300 gr. JFP	1,600 fps
Cor-Bon	320 gr. Penetrator	1,530 fps
Cor-Bon	335 gr. hard cast	1,535 fps
Cor-Bon	365 gr. Penetrator	1,455 fps