

How Much Accuracy Do You Need for Deer Hunting?

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BY SAM FADALA

KING OF THE TUM THE CARTRIID

No other round bests the .35 Remington for taking

Long ago in the smoke of a wilderness campfire, the myth of the “brush bucking” cartridge arose. It’s not hard to debunk. Place a target behind a healthy bush in your favorite white-tall thicket, and blast away. Even bullets fired from a .458 Winchester will deflect in the tangle.

True, some loads perform better than others in the thick woods, but none punches through brush with freight-train-like resolve.

While the ideal cartridge for taking big game in brush and wood doesn’t exist, one does come close — the century-old .35 Remington.

Gun writers have ignored, even impugned, this round for most of its hundred years, some wishing it dead. But it just won’t go away. It is the most successful short- to mid-range cartridge ever, doing its thing without hunters making much fuss about it.

We err in ranking cartridges. We say “better” when we really mean “bigger.” The .358 Winchester is better than the .35 Rem. No, bigger. The .35 Whelen is better than the .358 Winchester. No, bigger. The .350 Remington Magnum is better than the .35 Whelen. No, bigger. The .358 Norma Magnum is better than the .35 Whelen. No, bigger.

I’d rather set my hair on fire (what few strands I have left, that is) than carry a mule-kicking .358 Shooting Times Alaskan into the creek bottoms where

I hunt. The same goes for the rest of the .35-caliber clan bigger than the .35 Rem. There’s one possible exception: the overlooked, underrated, underappreciated and underworked .358 Winchester.

Along creek and river-bottom jungles and in dark forest, my Marlin 336 carbine in .35 Rem is hard to beat. Apparently a few million hunters have felt the same way about it from the dawning of the 20th century. It’ll be a long time before any



Remington not only championed the .35 Rem cartridge, but also has faithfully offered ammunition for it from the beginning. Today, thousands of .35 Rem cartridges in both 150-grain and 200-grain bullet choices flow annually from the Remington plant.

round catches up to the .30-30 in terms of big game brought to the table. But the .35 Rem has accounted for numberless deer, boar, black bears and much larger game. It supposedly left the drawing board of the Remington plant in 1906 for the

Model 8 autoloading rifle. But contrary evidence shows the .35 chambered in no rifle at all until 1908.

I came upon the .35 Rem in my 18th year. A Model 141 slide-action rifle loaned by Beyrl Wilson Sr., was thus chambered. Mr. Wilson hunted a variety of big game, but his passion was wapiti. He believed in his .35 Rem for elk. Rightfully so. The rifle/cartridge combination dropped multiple bulls for him every year over a lot of years. Only two of the elk he took required follow-up shots.

Wilson relied on factory ammo, with what he called Remington’s “umbrella tip” 200-grain bullet. He was a still-hunter with a compass in his brain. In a Wyoming, Montana, Colorado or Arizona forest, Mr. W. could trek miles into black timber, finding his way back to camp shortly after dark, usually with a bull elk marked down.

I’ve read that the .35 Rem was designed, as so many rounds have been, on the .30-06 case. This is not true. The .35 Rem carries its own unique dimensions. Head size is 0.473 inch for the .30-06. The .35 Rem’s is 0.457 inch (sometimes noted as 0.460 inch). Nor does this .35 belong to the little family

PHOTO BY JIM FADALA

MBER OGES

big game in the thickets.

of .25 Remington, .30 Remington and .32 Remington.

Over time, many rifle chambers have been cut to .35 Rem. The Remington 181 followed the 81. Remington's 14 preceded the 141 prior to the company's modern pump-action Model 760. Remington offered the .35 in its Model 600 and 720 bolt-action rifles. The Winchester Model 70 came in .35 Rem. Savage and Stevens built .35 Rem rifles. Add Standard Arms Models G and M and many more, including Remington's compact Model Seven FS. The famous Griffin & Howe firm offered lightweight sporters in .35 Rem based on the short Mauser 98 K action. Marlin has shown continued faith in the old round from 1952 into the 21st century. The great 336 now numbers 4 million sold. I got a real hoot

The .35 Rem in a carbine is easy to carry, particularly in dense woods. With game approaching, the compact Marlin Model 336 in .35 Rem can be shouldered quickly in one motion.

out of the company coming up with its brand-new 21st century 336 XLR-35 — the “35” standing for .35 Rem!

A fellow author named a batch of cartridges he thought should be jettisoned into the outer blackness of obsolescence. The .35 Rem was prominent on his hit list. The writer was not entirely wrong when he said the world could get along without it, as well as dozens of other cartridges. If this gentleman were my good friend, I would loan him my .30-06, the Morrison Precision rifle I call Mr. Clean Sweep. It has now clobbered 32 game animals in a row, never requiring a second shot on any.

But oh, what a dull world it would be if hunters had to be chained to only one cartridge and rifle. Part of the lure is hunting with different firearms in different calibers that match different game and conditions. Myriad elk and moose, as well as big bears, have been plopped to the earth with the .35 Rem.

The cartridge is not a “stopper.” It is best where shots across canyons are rare to nonexistent and the animal hunted is seldom bent on making a meal of the hunter. But it is a moose/elk round where shots are close. As for its demise, anyone who thinks the .35 Rem is hanging on the ropes for a 21st century knockout punch hasn’t seen the list of currently available ammo.

Winchester has a beauty in its Super-X 200-grain Power-Point. Remington has two fine loads — the 150-grain Express Core-Lokt Pointed Soft Point and 200-grain Core-Lokt round-nose Soft Point. Federal’s Power-Shok in .35 Rem comes with a 200-grain round-nose bullet.

The Buffalo Bullet Co.’s .35

Rem load brings out the cartridge’s full potential in modern arms. “It is fully capable of taking elk and moose with a 220-grain jacketed flat-point bullet that won’t over-mushroom,” says Tim Sundles of BBC. “I’ve never seen a Marlin 336 that didn’t shoot it well.” The 220-grain bullet attains 2,150 to 2,200 fps from a 20-inch barrel for up to 2,365 foot-pounds of muzzle energy.

Also noteworthy is Hornady’s inclusion of .35 Rem in its new LEVERevolution ammo. Those cartridges are aptly named, for nothing like them has ever come from any ammo factory. Clear and present warnings abound concerning using pointed bullets in tubular magazines. Never do it.

Hornady’s Flex-Tip bullet is pointed, but it won’t set off the round in front of it. Its sleek shape increases the ballistic coefficient, ensuring flatter trajectory and higher retained downrange energy. A Flex-Tip 200-grain bullet, sometimes noted as Ultra Soft Ballistic Flex-Tip, takes off at 2,200 feet per second from a 20-inch barrel.

The real story of the new Hornady ammo is not velocity. It is the increased BC rating. A 200-grain round-nose bullet earns a BC of .190, while Hornady’s LEVERevolution 200-grain bullet has a BC of .278. This means that the Flex-Tip can be sighted-in at 175 yards instead of the usual 150. As for performance on game, I have no experience with the Flex-Tip because the seasons were closed when the new ammo fell into my hands. But the bullet penetrated deep in the Bullet Test Tube, creating a formidable wound channel.

To be fair, a 200-grain Hornady round-nose bullet also produced a heck of a hole in the Test Tube, albeit with significantly lower arrival velocity. Either would have passed completely east to west in a north-



The .35 Rem cartridge uses many different powders to full advantage.

bound white-tailed buck. But the Flex-Tip would have provided more arrival energy. The advantage of the Flex-Tip is clearly flatter trajectory with additional downrange energy.

The 220-grain Buffalo Bullet punched a channel that shouted full confidence in Mr. Sundles’ claims of his custom .35 Rem ammo doing the job on elk and moose.

The theme of this little hike on the shooting trail is brush and timber hunting. So what good is flatter trajectory and increased downrange energy for thicket and forest hunting? Two things: First, none of my little demonstrations ever proved that round or flat-nose bullets did better in the thick than pointed bullets. Second, a longer shot may present itself.

I hunt a particular patch of deep forest for deer and elk. A pink elephant at 50 yards could go unseen in this place. But there are *ciénegas* — Spanish for meadows — that suddenly show up in the midst of heavy cover. Flatter trajectory and more energy come into play when bucks or bulls are spotted feeding in one of these open places.

On the other hand, any of the excellent 200- to 220-grain .35 Rem bullets can be sighted dead-on at 150 yards. A

Buffalo Bullet Co. ammo in .35 Rem has a 220-grain rather than a 200-grain bullet leaving the muzzle at 2,150 to 2,200 fps, which is great for hunting elk and moose. The .35 Rem and the .30-30 are successful midrange rounds, but the .35 is better suited to taking larger big game.



high-chest sight picture drops the bullet into the dispatch zone on a buck deer at 200.

I latched onto a supply of the new Hornady loads, not to replace those deadly blunter bullets, but to add to the versatility of this fine cartridge. I affirm the excellence of the new Hornady ammo. But my Marlin 336 carbine also loves standard factory fodder, plus the powerful BBA 220-grain load.

Power-wise, the .35 Rem shows light on paper. Velocity, or a lack of it, is the reason. A 200- to 220-grain bullet in the 2,000-fps muzzle-velocity zone does not set the world of kinetic energy on fire. And handloading doesn't do a lot for bullet speed. In fact, handloading this cartridge really isn't necessary, especially with Hornady's new stuff or the heavy-duty BPA load. Federal, Remington and Winchester loads are also deadly. I craft a few handloads for my Marlin 336 carbine because I can't help myself. I just have to build ammo. It's part curiosity and part therapy.

I cannot suggest a special powder for the .35 Rem because the short case

works with a long list of faster-burning propellants. The goal is a 200- to 220-grain bullet at 2,100 to 2,200 fps.

If you handload the .35 Rem, go with the manuals, never exceeding maxi-



The .30-30 Win and the .35 Rem together for a visual comparison.

um ratings, even though the cartridge functions at modest pressures.

Dark timber/thicket big game habitat is the right place to ply the special trade of the .35 Rem. I admire the

modern shooting world with its great new cartridges and guns. I appreciate the high-tech toys of the hour as well as the latest guns and ammo. There is no magnet drawing me back to the days when I hunted without the benefit of GPS allowing me to penetrate jungles almost as confidently as hunters with much better built-in "find-your-way-back radar" than I have. I am happy that my .30-06 is now a magnum when I want it to be one. But I cannot overlook the good things from the past just because they are old.

The .35 Rem cartridge is one of those gems from yesteryear. It goes on doing what it was designed to do, cleanly taking big game in close terrain. It does its thing with manageable recoil, more than sufficient accuracy, far enough reach, and deep bullet penetration with considerable tissue displacement, yet undue meat damage. I wish the cartridge continued success in the 21st century. But it doesn't need my help. It's been doing fine far longer than any current gun writer has been writing, or for that matter, living. ☺

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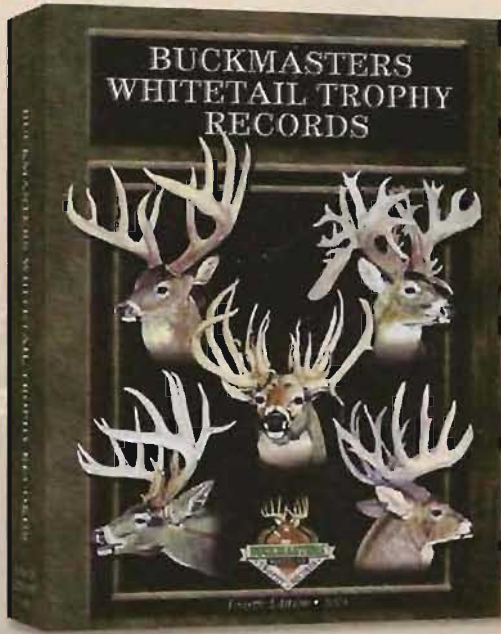


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