

NEF'S BIGGEST & BADDEST HANDI-RIFLE

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The .500 Handi-Rifle makes a great companion for the 4" S&W Model 500, or vice versa.

The New England Firearms Handi-Rifle is a remarkable offering in this day and age as it is not only dependable, accurate and very easy to use, it is also the premier bargain in the marketplace selling for less than \$300.

NEF offers Pardner shotguns chambered in all gauges as well as .410 in full-size and youth-size versions, slug guns, screw-in choke guns, camo guns and even a long-barreled waterfowl version. On the cartridge side, NEF offers the Handi Rifle, also in several versions and calibers including .204 Ruger, .223, .22/250, .243 Winchester, .25/06, .270, .280, 7mm-08, .30/06, .308, 7.62x39, and .35 Whelen all fitted with a base for

mounting a scope. NEF also offers several Handi-Rifle/Pardner combination guns with both a rifle and shotgun barrel.

Another version of the Handi-Rifle is especially handy as it comes with fiber-optic sites, a 22" barrel and is chambered in .22 Hornet, .30-30 Winchester, .44 Magnum, and .45-70. The latter three are all excellent woods and brush cartridges for deer while the Hornet makes a great close-range varmint car-

tridge when used with iron sights. A farmer or rancher coming upon a skunk or fox after the chickens or a rancher who finds a coyote after one of his newborn calves, can quickly dispose of the offender with the .22 Hornet Handi-Rifle. Any of these rifles carry easily in the rack of a pickup truck on farm, ranch, or simply for roaming desert, forest or mountains. The latest chambering in this version of the Handi-Rifle is the .500 S&W Magnum. When chambered in a sixgun, the .500, without using lightweight bullets at super high velocity, is the most powerful factory produced sixgun/cartridge combination. Put it in a rifle barrel and it outdistances the heaviest loads offered in the .45-70 and that is saying something!

YEAH, IT'S ALSO

Handy Handi-Rifles

All Handi-Rifles, except a special polymer-stocked Synthetic Model, feature walnut-finished American hardwood Monte Carlo pistol grip stocks with a generous recoil pad and sling swivel studs. The operation of the Handi-Rifle is simplicity in itself. When a lever on the top right side of the receiver is pressed, the action opens, and the barrel falls forward. The fired cartridge is extracted far enough to be grasped by the thumb and forefinger, removed, then replaced by a loaded round. The action is then closed and the hammer must be cocked before the Handi-Rifle can be fired. This whole operation takes less time than it does to describe it. The Handi-Rifle uses a transfer bar system preventing the hammer from touching the firing pin until it is cocked and the transfer bar moves upwards.

Light Sights

The fixed-sighted Handi-Rifles have excellent sights very easy to pick up even by my eyes. They are fiber-optic style with a bright red front dot matched up with two brilliant green dots on the rear sight. These are not the best sights for precise paper punching especially at longer ranges, however, they are perfect for what this rifle is designed for — up close critter confrontation and, in .500, qualifies as a handler of the biggest beasts around. The front sight is mounted in a dovetail and can be adjusted for windage. The rear sight slides up and down on the base and is easily adjusted for elevation. Normally, most rifle stocks are a little long for me, however the .500 Handi-Rifle comes up very easily and quickly to the shoulder, and the sights are very fast. As a close-up rifle in heavy cover, this little rifle would be fast into action and very convincing.

This version of the Handi-Rifle has a 22" barrel, and although rated at seven pounds, it actually weighs just three ounces over six pounds on my postal scale. It breaks down into three parts for easy transporting, consisting of the forearm, barrel and the action with butt-stock attached. Remove one screw in the forearm to take it off the barrel and the barrel can then be removed from the receiver. The trigger pull measures right at five pounds and groups might be little tighter if it was taken down to somewhere in the neighborhood of three to four pounds.

First The Fun

The .500 S&W may be a handgun cartridge, however it definitely qualifies as a rifle cartridge. In fact it might be looked upon as a modernization of the old .50-70 Govt. rifle cartridge and I tried to use it with both black powder



These 25-yard groups (above) were fired with some favorite fun loads in the NEF .500 Handi-Rifle. Heavy Hunting Handloads fired in the NEF .500 Handi-Rifle take their toll physically, yet are quite accurate (below). The rifle weighs only a little more than six pounds.



and Hodgdon's Triple-Seven. I did not have the proper bullets, which should be relatively soft and lubricated with a lube specially made for black powder use, such as SPG or Lyman's Black Powder Gold. Using the bullet I did have, the hard-cast Dry Creek 440-grain Keith

bullet over 30 grains by weight of Triple-Seven, a load which fills the case right to the bottom on the bullet without compression, gives 1,120 fps but the desired accuracy is not there. Promising, but not enough, so the old-style loads will have to wait until I come up with the right bullet.

I place any load in the Fun/Hunting category with a muzzle velocity under 1,400 fps. Actually for pure fun and enjoyment, 1,250 fps would be a better ceiling as after this, the loads start to talk to the shooter in no uncertain terms. Just to see what would happen, I loaded up bullets I had on hand with 10 grains of Unique. After you've done this many, many times over many, many years, sometimes the blind pig and the acorn actually proves true. With this load under the Cast Performance Bullet Co. 440 LFNGC (long flatnose gas check) muzzle velocity is a very pleasant shooting 935 fps and the Handi-Rifle places three shots in 5/8" at 25 yards. This is simply an accurate and easy shooting combination and would certainly shoot through any deer.

HANDI-RIFLE

Maker: H&R 1871

60 Industrial Rowe

Gardner, MA 01440

(978) 630-8220, www.hr1871.com

ACTION TYPE: Single-Shot,
Break Open

CALIBER: .500 S&W (tested),
22 Hornet, 30-30,
44 Magnum, .45-70

CAPACITY: 1

BARREL LENGTH: 22"

OVERALL LENGTH: 38"

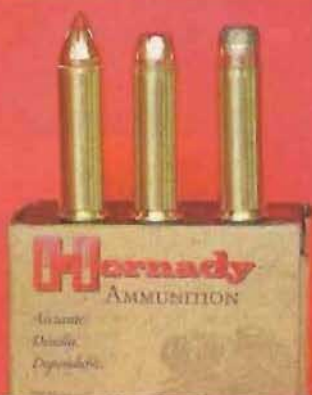
WEIGHT: 6 Pounds 3 Ounces

FINISH: Blued

SIGHTS: Fiber optic adjustable
sights

STOCK: American hardwood

PRICE: \$275



Hornady offers three .500 S&W Magnum loads all of which perform well in the .500 Handi-Rifle, a 300-grain Evolution, a 350-grain XTP/MAG, and a 500-grain FP/XTP.



Cor-Bon's excellent offerings for the .500 include a 275-grain Barnes, 400-grain JSP, and a 440-grain Hard Cast.



Buffalo Bore offers two 440-grain LFNGC bullets, a mild 1,500 fps and heavy 1,925 fps load (Handi-Rifle velocities), plus a 400-grain JFN.



Winchester's offering for the .500 S&W is a 400-grain Platinum Tip HP with a heavy jacket, and a two-part hollow cavity notched for controlled expansion.

Fun Loads

I thought the 440/10-grains load was great until I tried the CPBC 370-grain version over the same powder charge. These are a little faster at 1,000 fps, shoot even easier and are accurate enough to cut one very slightly oblong hole measuring .625" in diameter. That translates to a 3-shot group of 1/8" and I can't even hold a rifle this steady! And again, although this is an accurate fun-shooting load, it would certainly work well on deer and feral hogs. Compare these loads to the standard .45 Colt sixgun loading from the black powder days of a 255-grain bullet at 850 to 900

fps, which was carried over into the smokeless powder era, and which has taken innumerable deer, black bear, hogs, and even more than a few grizzlies. This puts these fun loads into the proper perspective.

Hodgdon/IMR recently introduced a new powder, Trail Boss, specifically made for light loads in large capacity cases. It is a natural for use in the .500 Magnum offering very pleasant shooting loads in the 925 to 1,025 fps range. Going up a notch we can use 25 to 27 grains of either H4227 or IMR 4227, which will be the same powder by the time you read this with H4227 being marketed as IMR4227, and the velocity

NEF .500 S&W HANDI-RIFLE FUN/HUNTING LOADS

Bullet (brand, weight)	Load (powder, charge weight, grains)	Velocity (fps)	Group Size (inches)
OREGON TRAIL 370 GC	Trail Boss 11.7	1,028	1½
CAST PERF. BULLET 370 GC	Unique 10	999	1/8!!
CAST PERF. BULLET 370 GC	H4227 25	1,298	1
CAST PERF. BULLET 370 GC	IMR4227 27	1,327	1½
CAST PERF. BULLET 440 GC	Unique 10	935	5/8
CAST PERF. BULLET 440 GC	H4227 25	1,312	5/8
CAST PERF. BULLET 440 GC	IMR4227 27	1,326	1½
DRY CREEK 440 KEITH	Trail Boss 10	926	1½
DRY CREEK 440 KEITH	Universal 12	1,122	1½
DRY CREEK 440 KEITH	IMR4227 27	1,332	1½

Notes: Groups are the result of three shots at 25 yards.

NEF .500 S&W HANDI-RIFLE HUNTING HANDLOADS

Bullet (brand, weight)	Load (powder, charge weight, grains)	Velocity (fps)	Group Size (inches)
CAST PERF. BULLET 370 GC	H4227 30	1,513	1½
CAST PERF. BULLET 400 GC	5744 32.5	1,472	1½
CAST PERF. BULLET 440 GC	H4227 30	1,521	1½
CAST PERF. BULLET 440 GC	5744 32.5	1,461	3/4
OREGON TRAIL 370 GC	H4227 30	1,585	1½
DRY CREEK 440 KEITH	H4227 30	1,552	7/8
DRY CREEK 440 KEITH	5744 32.5	1,477	3/4
SIERRA 400 JFP	5744 32.5	1,419	5/8

Notes: Groups are the result of three shots at 25 yards.

NEF .500 S&W HANDI-RIFLE FACTORY HUNTING LOADS

Load (brand, weight)	Velocity (fps)	Group Size (inches)
BUFFALO BORE 400 JFN	2,035	1½
BUFFALO BORE 440 LFNGC	1,497	1½
BUFFALO BORE 440 LFNGC/HEAVY	1,925	1
COR-BON 275 BARNES	2,068	1½
COR-BON 400 JSP	1,971	1½
COR-BON 440 HARD CAST	1,947	1½
HORNADY 300 EVOLUTION	2,248	3/4
HORNADY 350 XTP/MAG	2,056	3/4
HORNADY 500 FP/XTP	1,546	5/8
WINCHESTER 400 PLATINUM TIP HP	1,978	7/8

Notes: Groups are the result of three shots at 25 yards.

is more in the 1,300 fps range. Now the fun loads are becoming more serious, and the recoil pad doesn't do the job quite as well, so we can we start reaching for the Pact Magnum shoulder pad if we are going to do any extended shooting.

Getting Serious

Loads in this category start to show the real capabilities of the .500 S&W Magnum in a rifle. My two powders of choice and their amounts are 30 grains of H4227 or 32.5 grains of AA5744 with 370-, 400-, and 440-grain gas-checked bullets from CPBC and/or Oregon Trail Bullets, the 440-grain Keith Bullets from Dry Creek Bullet Works, and Sierra's 400-grain JFP. With these loads and bullet choices, muzzle velocities are in the mid-1,400s to high 1,500s. All of the bullets have wide, flat meplats (noses) and smack with great authority matched up with deep penetration. All results are in the accompanying chart, however, a few of note are the heavier bullets, the 400-grain Sierra and 440-grain CPBC and Dry Creek bullets all of which group well under 1" at 25 yards. This means when up close situations can easily become nasty, a bullet can be placed with surgical precision.

Heavy Duty Factory Loads

The .500 S&W Magnum has only been around for little over three years, however, the ammunition companies have not wasted any time in providing full-house loads. The Smith & Wesson Model 500, as one might expect, was

the first sixgun chambered in the largest of all Magnum sixgun cartridges. It is also now offered by Magnum Research in their single action BFR revolver and SSK offers custom Encore barrels, which, by the way, are superbly accurate in the .500 Magnum. As this is written I know of 10 factory loads all of which perform well, and in some cases exceptionally well, in the Handi-Rifle.

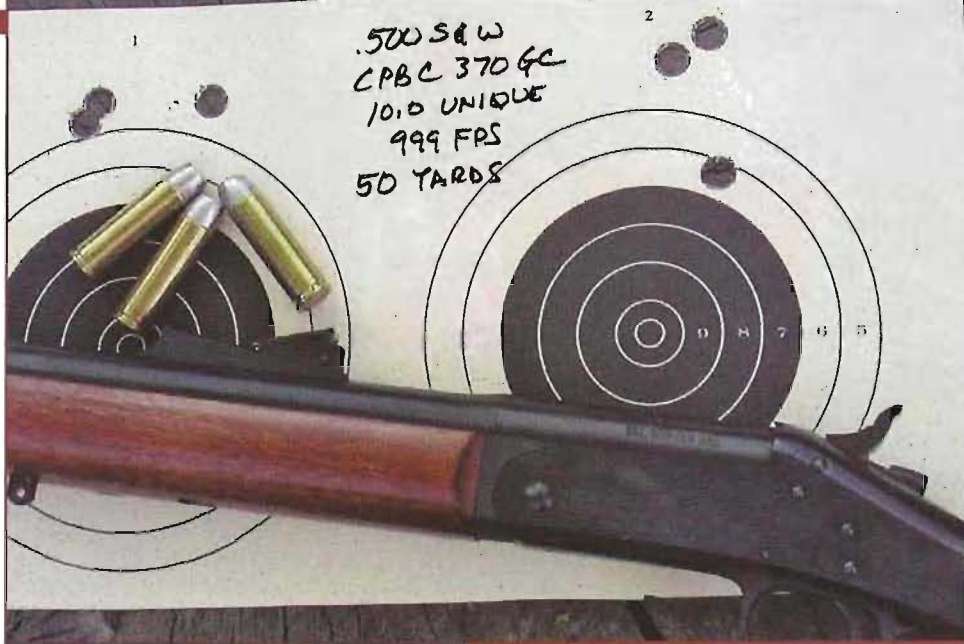
When we start pushing 400-grain bullets at 2,000 fps from a six-pound rifle, life is not all that pleasant. One definitely does not simply lay the forearm on a sandbag and pull the trigger. If that forearm isn't held on to this little rifle can jump right out of your hands.

I definitely would not want to shoot many of these off the bench without using the Past Magnum Recoil Pad available from Battenfeld Technologies. This is a most handy item to have around and mine stays in the pickup. The Handi-Rifle picked up about 300 fps muzzle velocity over the same loads fired from a revolver.

Buffalo Bore offers three loads for the .500 and they have always been known for offering full-house loads. Two of these are a 400-grain jacketed flatnose at 2,035 fps and a 440-grain LFNGC at 1,925 fps. They also wisely offer a "mild" loading of the same 440-grain bullet at 1,500 fps. Cor-Bon was the first to market with .500 loads. Their loading with the 275 Barnes hollowpoint bullet clocks out at nearly 2,100 fps, while their 400-grain JSP and 440 Hard Cast are right at 1,950 fps. Not much needs to be done, anywhere, anytime, that cannot be done with one of these six loads.

Hornady has three jacketed loads all of which shoot well under 1" at 25 yards. The first is the 300 Evolution, having the same polymer tip as the levergun LEVERevolution loads recently

.500 S&W
CPBC 370 GC
10.0 UNIQUE
999 FPS
50 YARDS



Typical 50 yard groups with the open-sighted .500 Handi Rifle (above) show good enough potential to take just about any game animal quickly. The single shot Handi-Rifle is very quick and easy to load and unload (below).



The easily adjustable rear sight on the NEF Handi-Rifle (above) features two very easy to see green fiber optic dots. The front sight on the Handi-Rifle (below) is a fiber-optic red dot.



offered in .30-30, .35 Remington, .444 Marlin, .45-70, and .450 Marlin and clocks out at 2,250 fps. That is basically a bullet with twice the weight of a .30-30 at standard .30-30 muzzle velocities. Hornady's 350-grain XTP hollowpoint also has a muzzle velocity of over 2,000 fps, while their super heavy-duty load, a 500 grain flatpoint XTP has a muzzle velocity from the Handi-Rifle of 1,550 fps. This load is definitely not in the pleasure shooting class. Finally from Winchester we have a .500 S&W load with the Platinum Tip hollowpoint design for both penetration and expansion with a notched hollowpoint also in two diameters for controlled expansion.

While testing the Handi-Rifle for several days, the temperatures were over 100 degrees and I had no desire to walk long distances to set up targets. As stated before, the sights provided on this version of the Handi-Rifle are made for close-up quick shooting, not long-range precision. I did shoot enough loads at 50 yards to know with my loads, my hands and my eyes, I can stay under 2". I cannot envision any reason to shoot at longer ranges with this big-bore Handi-Rifle. 