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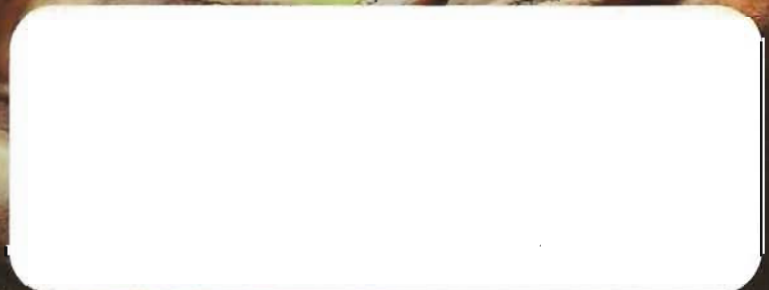
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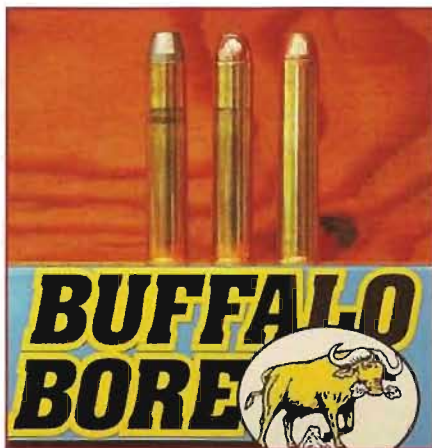
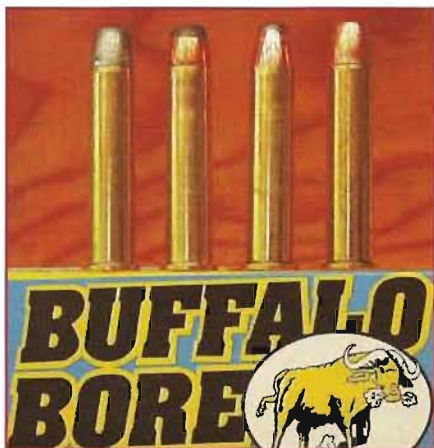
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**HEAVY DUTY FACTORY LOADS
FOR THE BIG-BORE LEVERGUN.**

by John Taffin

With the arrival of the first successful levergun, the 1860 Henry, the pattern was set for several decades of big bore hunting rifles. The 1860 Henry and its almost immediate successor, the 1866, were both chambered for the rimfire ".44 Henry Flat." This was then shortly succeeded by the .44 WCF, chambered in the Model 1873. By today's standards, neither of these big bores were particularly powerful cartridges.

That was about to change with the advent of the Winchester 1876, the Marlin 1881, and the Winchester 1886. These three serious hunting leverguns chambered much more powerful cartridges such as the .45-75 in the 1876, and the .45-70 in the 1881 and 1886. The latter was also chambered in a variety of "Big Fifty" cartridges; the .50-70, .50-90 and .50-110. These may have been black powder cartridges but they don't have to take a back seat when it comes to game stopping power.

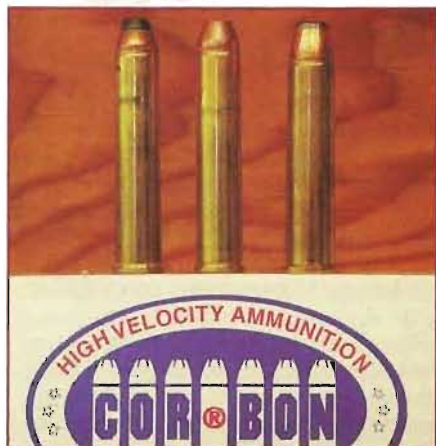
By the 1890s, calibers began to change

dramatically. With the advent of smokeless powder, small bore, high-velocity cartridges pushed the big bores from center stage. From the mid-1890s to the eve of World War I, the arrival of such now classic cartridges as the 7x57, .30-40, .30-30, and .30-'06 wrote the death song for the big bore leverguns. Almost.

Renewed Interest

The pendulum started swinging back in the 1970s. Marlin became serious about big bore leverguns by reintroducing the .45-70 in the new Model 1895, and bringing forth a totally new cartridge, the .444 Marlin, in the Model 444. Today we have big bore lever-action rifles chambered in .444 Marlin, .45-70, .450 Marlin (Which is nothing more than the .45-70 with a smaller rim and a belt to prevent it from chambering in old .45-70s). As well as a resurrection of the original

Below is a selection of heavy factory loads, from left: Buffalo Bore .45-70 with 420-gr. LBTGC; 400-gr. JFN; 350-gr. JFN and 500-gr. FMJ. Next Buffalo Bore .444 Marlin loads with 335-gr. LFNGC; 300-gr. JFN and 270-gr. JFN. Next Buffalo Bore loads for the .38-55 consisting of 270-gr. LFN (378"); 270-gr. LFN (380") and 255-gr. JFN. Lastly, three from CorBon: .444 280-gr. BC; .444 305-gr. JFP and a .45-70 loading with 350-gr. BC bullet.



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38-55

255 JFN

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3

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HEAVY FACTORY HUNTING LOADS FOR THE .45-70 SPRINGFIELD (MARLIN 1895)

LOAD	18" CARBINE			26" OCTAGON BBL RIFLE		
	MV	TKO	GROUP	MV	TKO	GROUP*
Buffalo Bore 420-gr. LBT	1,967	51.5	NA	2,052	56.3	1 1/8"
Buffalo Bore 400-gr. JFN	1,774	46.4	NA	1,858	48.6	3/4"
Buffalo Bore 350-gr. JFN	2,067	47.3	NA	2,139	49.0	1 1/8"
Buffalo Bore 500-gr. FMJ	1,615	52.8	NA	1,674	54.8	NA
Cor-Bon 350-gr. Bonded Core	1,872	42.9	NA	2,031	46.5	NA
Cor-Bon 405-gr. Penetrator	1,573	41.7	NA	1,741	46.1	NA
Garrett 405-gr. JFP	1,727	45.8	3/4"	1,812	48.0	NA
Garrett 415-gr. HC Hammerhead	1,802	48.9	1 1/4"	1,870	50.8	1 1/8"
Garrett 530-gr. HC Hammerhead	1,461	50.7	2 3/8"	1,551	53.8	1 1/8"

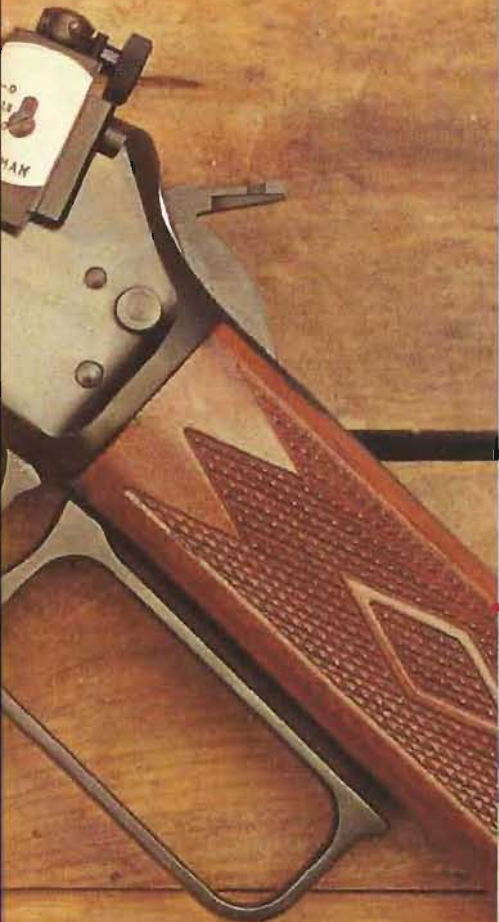
*Three shots at 50 Yards.

chambering of the Winchester Model 1894, the .38-55.

The .348 Winchester is realistically dead, however blown out it basically becomes the .50 Alaskan. While not factory chambered in any levergun, the .50 Alaskan is so popular in custom rifles factory loads are now offered by Buffalo Bore.

To this list might be added the .45 Colt and the .44 Magnum, both of which are more than suitable for deer and hogs when loaded with heavy bullets for deep penetration. But for the moment, let's look only at cartridges designed for rifle rather than handgun use.

Until very recently, it was very difficult to find true heavy-duty loads for big game. Deer loads were fairly easy to locate for the .444 Marlin and the .45-70, however, serious loads for heavy boned, heavily muscled big game that was capable of easily biting back



HEAVY FACTORY HUNTING LOADS FOR THE .38-55 (MARLIN 336 24")

LOAD	MV	3 SHOTS/50 YARDS
Buffalo Bore 255-gr. JFN (.377")	1,980	1"
Buffalo Bore 270-gr. LFN (.378")	1,878	1¼"
Buffalo Bore 270-gr. LFN (.380")	1,884	7/8"
Winchester 255-gr. Soft Point	1,209	5/8"

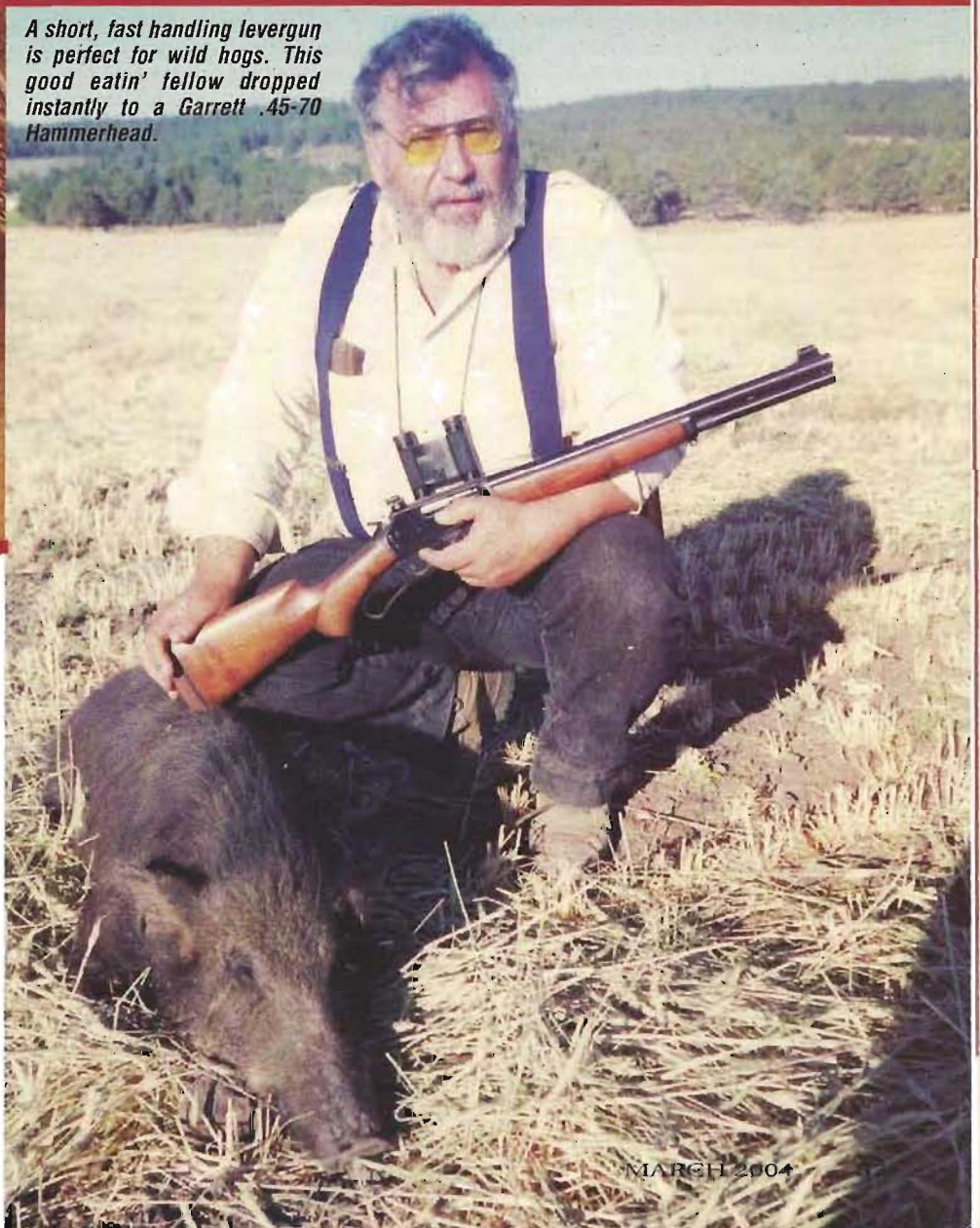
HEAVY FACTORY HUNTING LOADS FOR THE .444 MARLIN (MARLIN 444 18½")

LOAD	MV	TKO	3 SHOTS/50 YARDS
Buffalo Bore 270-gr. JFN	2,210	36.7	1½"
Buffalo Bore 300-gr. JFN	2,095	38.6	1¼"
Buffalo Bore 325-gr. LFN	2,009	40.1	1¾"
Cor-Bon 280-gr. BC	2,248	38.7	1¾"
Cor-Bon 305-gr. JFP	2,070	38.8	1¾"

HEAVY FACTORY HUNTING LOADS FOR THE .50 ALASKAN (MARLIN 336 18½")

LOAD	MV	TKO
Buffalo Bore 525-gr. WFN	1,795	68.9
Buffalo Bore 500-gr. JFN	1,805	66.0
Buffalo Bore 450-gr. LFN	2,018	66.4
Buffalo Bore 450-gr. JFN	1,972	64.9

A short, fast handling levergun is perfect for wild hogs. This good eatin' fellow dropped instantly to a Garrett .45-70 Hammerhead.



were simply not to be found. The .45-70 loads were kept at 1873 Trapdoor levels, while the .444 Marlin was handicapped by being loaded with thin-skinned bullets better suited for the .44 Magnum sixgun.

Some Do, Some Don't

For the handloader this is no obstacle, but it's good to remember from time to time that not every shooter is a reloader. Frankly, if you're a serious shooter, you should learn to reload, if only for the tremendous cost saving that permits more shooting. But for some, this isn't an option, and for this reason, we're going to look at heavy-duty factory loads for the big-bore levergun.

Heavy-duty loads with heavyweight bullets designed for deep penetration are readily available today due primarily to the efforts of three ammunition companies:

Buffalo Bore, Cor-Bon and Garrett Cartridges. Let's look at what's available.

.38-55 Winchester: The .30-30 receives most of the attention and the glory when it comes to leverguns, however, it's a Johnny come lately. The .38-55 and the .32-40 were the original chamberings in the Model 1894 Winchester. These were both black powder cartridges, and they were soon overshadowed by their non-smoking little brother, the .30-30, which became Winchester's first smokeless powder load for the Model 1894 in 1895.

The .38-55 has been handicapped all these years by being loaded to black powder levels. Today Marlin offers a beautiful Model 336 chambered in .38-55. These come with 24-inch octagonal barrels which are great for shooting off the bench and long-range, however cut to about 18½ inches they make a dandy woods rifle.

Winchester still offers a superbly accurate .38-55 load at around 1,200 fps making it a fine close range deer cartridge. In an entirely different class are Buffalo Bore's Heavy Loads of which there are three.

Two of these are identical except for bullet diameter as there is a lot of variation in .38-55 bores. Marlin's and Winchester's can be quite finicky about bullets size, so Buffalo Bore offers hard cast bullets of both .378" and .380" diameters at around 1,900 fps; as well as a 255-grain jacketed flat nose that comes very close to 2,000 fps in the 24-inch Marlin.

Pondoro's Formula

Now we come to the true big bores. These are designed mostly for deep penetration on large heavy game. Every loading available from Buffalo Bore, Cor-Bon, and Garrett plus a few from other makers have been included with selected loads being shot for accuracy to give an idea of what to expect. I have also listed the TKO (Taylor Knock Out value) for each load.

TKO is vastly misunderstood. In fact the last time I used it with heavy sixgun loads, I was taken to task by the editors of two other magazines. One was even nice enough to call me and warn me ahead of time. TKO was derived by John "Pondoro" Taylor of elephant hunting fame as a simple way to compare large bullet loads designed for use on big game.

The numbers mean nothing except as a way to rank heavy bullet loads. Do not try to make it anything else! It cannot be used to compare say a .22-250 to a .30-'06 to a .458 Winchester, but it works nicely for comparing heavyweight .444 Marlin and .45-70.

TKO is found by multiplying bullet weight x muzzle velocity x caliber and then dividing everything by 7,000 which happens to be the number of grains in a pound. Muzzle energy is skewed towards muzzle velocity, while TKO emphasizes caliber and bullet weight.

A 55-grain bullet at 3,800 fps from a .220 Swift has a muzzle energy of 1,764 ft/lbs or the same as a 405-grain .45-70 at 1,400 fps. ME tells us they are equal; common sense

says no. One is a long range varmint load while the other feels very comforting when up close on something that can bite back.

If we could apply TKO to both loads, which we cannot do because they are so different, the .220 Swift load comes out at 6.6 while the .45-70 scores 37.1. Taylor's formula makes quite good sense when comparing apples to apples; that is, .444 Marlin to .45-70 to .50 Alaskan.

The Real Big Bores

.444 Marlin: This is another of those excellent ideas that wasn't carried out quite right at least until very recently. The rifle itself was originally offered with a long barrel and a comb on the butt stock to facilitate using a scope. Everything needed for a long-range rifle, yet original factory ammunition was loaded with bullets better suited to .44 Magnum use.

I view the .444 quite differently. For my use I want a quick handling, short barreled, easy packing, quick into action, levergun shooting heavy bullets. The ammunition is now here from both Buffalo Bore and Cor-Bon, while both Marlin and Winchester have offered 18-inch carbines in recent years.

The .444 Marlin does with 300-grain bullets what the .45-70 can accomplish with 400-grain bullets. This gives shooters a real choice. Current Marlin's have barrels cut-rifled to handle cast bullets and jacketed bullets. Earlier Marlin's will work just fine with

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.45-70: As a rifle cartridge the .45-70 dates all the way back to 1873. For nearly two decades, the .45-70 would be our service rifle cartridge. Even though it was replaced by the .30-40 Krag in 1892, National Guard and Volunteer Regiments were armed with the .45-70 until after the turn-of-the-century.

The .45-70 could well be considered America's big bore when it comes to hunting large critters. Until very recently it was loaded to black powder levels or slightly above so that all loads were safe in old Trapdoors. With the advent of the Marlin Model 1895 in 1972 and Ruger's No. 1 single-shot rifle, many loading manuals began including three levels of .45-70 loads. The lowest level for Trapdoors, the middle level for modern lever actions, and the highest level for the Ruger's No. 1.

It took awhile for ammunition companies to catch up with the loading manuals, however now Buffalo Bore, Cor-Bon, and Garrett offer serious loads for the .45-70. These are for use only in currently manufactured, or relatively new, factory chambered .45-70s. Buffalo Bore lists the rifles suitable for their loads on each package of ammunition.

The .45-70 has taken virtually every large dangerous animal on the planet. Garrett Cartridges recently released a pamphlet with pictures showing one of their customers taking all of Africa's largest and most dangerous animals with their 540-grain load. For facing

large dangerous animals with an attitude, a properly loaded lever action .45-70 is exceptionally comforting.

The Marlin Model 1895 is an excellent basic rifle, and even Marlin has used it for several special editions with short barrels, long barrels, octagon barrels, and even half round/half octagon barreled limited editions.

A Pair Of Favorites

Two my favorite .45-70s are Marlins given the custom treatment by gunsmith Keith DeHart. One straight stocked version has been fitted with a 26-inch barrel mainly for target shooting with heavy cast bullets using both smokeless and black powder loads, while the other has been cut to a very easy handling pistol gripped 18-inch carbine. Both are now equipped with receiver sights and the latter makes an exceptionally good, lights out right now levergun for use on wild hogs.

.50 Alaskan: You say you want real power and real recoil in a levergun? Here it is, the .50 Alaskan. As its name suggests, this cartridge was designed for the big stuff Alaska has to offer such as brown bear and moose. With a light, easy to carry, short-barreled Marlin such as built by gunsmith David Clay, one has all the power and all the attendant recoil that should ever be found in a lever-action rifle.

A look at the chart reveals the heaviest TKOs for each of the big bore cartridges when fired in comparable leverguns to be the

.444 Marlin, 40.1; .45-70, 52.8, and the .50 Alaskan is way of the top of the chart with a TKO of 68.9. Again, these numbers are only for ranking, however anyone who has ever shot a full house .45-70 knows exactly what this tells us about the .50 Alaskan!

Never have shooters had such real choices when it comes to heavy-duty loads matched up with heavy-duty leverguns. For the non-handloader, these are the factory loads which rev up your modern levergun to its full hunting capability. We're fortunate to have such fine ammunition available to us.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Buffalo Bore

[208] 756-8085
100 Freeman Creek Rd.
Carmen, Idaho 83462

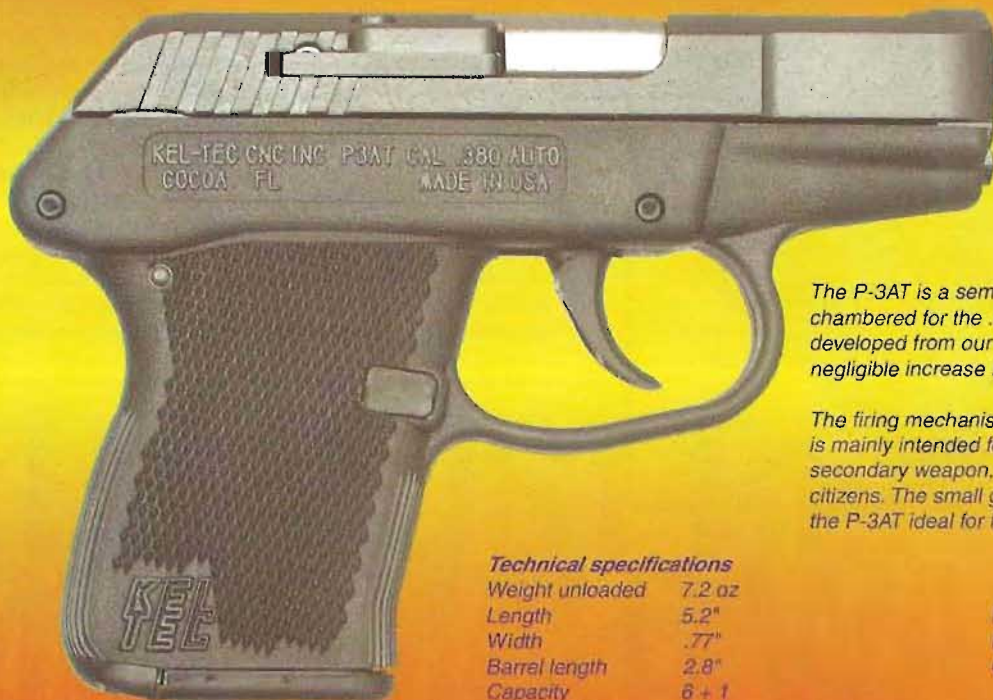
Cor-Bon

[800] 626-7266
1311 Industry Rd.
Sturgis, S.D. 57785

Garrett Cartridges,

[360] 736-0702
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