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SPOTTING SCOPE

Dave Scovill



DANGEROUS GAME CARTRIDGES

Q: Love your magazine. Could you guys do a study on the .45-70 in comparison to other dangerous game cartridges? Perhaps test the Garrett and Buffalo Bore rounds against the .375 H&H or .458 Winchester Magnum or Lott? If you check out many of the forums, you will see heated debates on this topic. Would be a great seller for you guys and a great read for us!!

- C.A.L., via Internet

the .45-70 in Africa, where he used a Cor-Bon 400-grain solid to shoot a Cape buffalo, whereupon the bullet exited the bull and killed a cow buffalo that had gone unnoticed on the other side of the bull. The bull took off, and Brian shot it in the south end where the solid penetrated to the heart, ending the affair in fairly short fashion.

So, it may be logical, from Brian's account, to assume the .45-70 is perfectly adequate for Cape buffalo - assuming one is using a 400-grain solid at approximately 1,800 fps and the range is limited to 100 yards or less. Most folks would be tempted to ask whether Brian's hunt would have turned up similar results if he had



A: Good idea, but the truth is, there is no comparison between the .45-70 and the .375 H&H, .458 Winchester Magnum or .458 Lott. And, at the risk of possibly inciting a riot on the Internet, I'll tell you why.

Right off, I would imagine this "debate" is somewhat inspired by the story Brian Pearce did about



Anyone can hunt potentially dangerous game with the .45-70 (1), but fighting cartridges like the (2) .458 Winchester Magnum, (3) .375 H&H and (4) .458 Lott are in a completely different class.

used a 400-grain softnose. Either way, it's a bit of a stretch to compare Brian's load in the .45-70 to a 300-grain solid at 2,400 fps from a .375 H&H, or a 500-grain solid at 2,100 or 2,300 fps from the .458 Winchester or Lott. It's plainly obvious, or should be, that the two .458 belted cartridges pack a lot more clout than the .45-70, regardless of which performance criterion anyone might choose, i.e. kinetic energy or Taylor's knock-out formula.

The comparison, then, should really address these cartridges in terms of performance potential on large game, or at what point is a cartridge considered adequate or acceptable in terms of producing a high percentage of one-shot kills on buffalo, lions or even elephant.

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Obviously, the performance evaluation has to include bullets, soft-noses, solids or whatever, like the X-Bullet. If we restrict the dialogue to softnose bullets, the .45-70 with a 400-grain Kodiak or Hawk with a .050-inch jacket is probably acceptable for Cape buffalo, assuming proper bullet placement. That also applies to the .375 H&H with a Swift A-Frame or Nosler Partition. But, no matter how you cut it, a 500-grain, .458-inch bullet at 2,000 fps impact velocity delivers a tremendous blow, even on soft body shots. The same could be said of the .470 NE or the .404 Jeffery and .416 Rigby or Remington Magnum. All assuming, of course, the bullet is up to the job at hand.

I'm also reminded that there are hunting cartridges and fighting cartridges, the latter being those that are required to administer a one-shot stop in a fight that was started with a .375 H&H, for instance. So, while it may be possible to stop an enraged four-footed antagonist with a .45-70, the .458 Lott and .470 NE are superior tools for the job.

Then there's an experience my friend Martin Pieters recounted one evening as we lounged around the campfire in the Okavango last August. It seems one of his clients wounded a Cape buffalo, and they failed to find it before the client had to leave. So, Martin went back out and spent two days searching through a little less than 2,000 buffalo before he found the wounded bull, which promptly took exception to Martin's intrusion and charged. Martin responded with a 500-grain .470 solid, between the eyes, and the bull fell dead at his feet. He would have tried the frontal heart shot, but the bull was so close that the angle was not right. The effect, no doubt, would have been the same had Martin used a 500-grain solid in the .458 Lott or .458 Winchester Magnum or 400-grain solid in the .416 Rigby or Remington Magnum.

It might also be claimed the .45-70 with a 500-grain solid would have stopped that bull as well, but

it should be plainly obvious that if one is to error in cartridge selection for such work, it is best to error on the heavier side. At that, there are countless horror stories of Cape buffalo taking multiple hits from .458 Winchesters or .470 NE doubles, or combinations thereof, before giving up, or stomping on some unfortunate soul's body parts. There is even a well-documented episode where a huge Cape buffalo took a 400-grain bullet through the heart from a .404 Jeffery, and it waited in ambush for 30 minutes, at which time the hunter approached and the bull got up and charged, receiving another slug in the eye at spitting distance.

So, it's not adequate to address the problem of how cartridges might compare in normal hunting situations. It is only when the worst possible scenario is considered that the wheat is clearly separated from the chaff.

The point of all this is that we could argue to the point of reductio ad absurdum as to whether or not the .45-70 is the equal of other, more established dangerous game cartridges. But it is important to keep in mind that the animal is only dangerous if the situation is screwed up or gets out of hand. So, let's consider, hypothetically, if the bull Brian shot turned the other way and came back at them. All of a sudden, the tables have turned, and the animal becomes a serious threat. Would the .45-70 with a 400-grain solid at 1,800 fps be enough to stop the bull before it hooks a horn into someone?

I'm also mindful of the fact the most vocal critics of any cartridge are, in large part, those who have never used it, or simply used a bullet that was ill-suited to the task. This brings to mind Elmer Keith's comments regarding the .30-06, damning with faint praise, when in fact, he was talking about the bullets of his day.

If you load the .45-70 right to the gunnels with powder under a heavy solid, either copper or hard cast lead, in a Ruger No. 1, the old

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black-powder cartridge takes on an entirely different personality. (Hornady lists loads for its 500-grain solid at 1,800 fps in the .45-70 Ruger No. 1.) The same could be said for the .450 Marlin, .450 Alaskan, .45-90 WCF and, to some degree, smokeless loads in the .50-100-450 in modern rifles. There's even the .50 Alaskan to consider, especially when it tosses 450-grain bullets around at a bit over 2,000 fps from an 18.5-inch barrel and 535-grain bullets at 1,850 fps from a 26-inch tube. These .50 Alaskan Buffalo Bore loads are creeping right up on the .458 Winchester Magnum.

I've used all the above, except the .450 Marlin, to take deer-sized game, elk and bears, and I would be hard pressed to distinguish the end result produced by any of them from the rest - where the right bullet is used for the task at hand. If you really want to confuse the issue, I'll toss in the .50 Black Powder Express used in Africa on Cape buffalo and plains game, and the .50-90 Sharps used on bison, deer and elk - all .50-caliber loads using black powder, of course.

Sometimes I wonder if we aren't just arguing death by degree, e.g., a 400-grain solid at 1,800 fps from a .45-70 is adequate for whatever, but the same bullet at 1,550 fps is little more than a recipe for dismal failure. Where does that bullet downgrade from "perfectly adequate" to "marginal" or "inadequate" - 1,400, 1,450 or 1,500 fps?

I'm also aware that a lot of folks like to have things tied up in a tidy little package in terms of kinetic energy or Taylor's K-O values, but you may rest assured, it isn't that easy. Big, heavy bullets usually perform all out of proportion to their paper numbers. The bison I shot some time back yielded 892 pounds of boned meat, something over a ton on the hoof, and it went to its knees within seconds after receiving a 535-grain cast bullet at ± 200 yards, where velocity had dropped to little more than 900 fps. Seeing the snow fly on the other side of the beast, it ap-

peared the bullet didn't even slow down on the way through, leaving huge holes in both lungs and shattering ribs on the way in and out. Who would have guessed? One thing we know for sure, any attempt to evaluate cartridge/bullet performance of these big-bore/heavy bullet cartridges using the same criterion commonly associated with .30, .338 and .375 bores (i.e. high velocity and energy numbers) will usually lead to nothing but frustration and/or self-inflicted psychosis.

So, what about the debate comparing the .375 H&H, etc., etc? Rest assured, it will rage on, fostered on both sides by critics who would never dream of using a .45-70 on anything, let alone a Cape buffalo, and big-bore fanatics who claim any bullet at less than 2,000 fps that generates anything less than 5,000 foot-pounds at the muzzle is doomed to failure on any animal larger than a 40-pound diker.

This reminds me of a reader who asked which of two cast bullets – an RCBS .45-270 SAA (SWC) or LBT WFN – of equal weight at the same velocity had superior killing power on hogs or deer-sized game. I suggested it would be a tossup, but the WFN might kill the animal deader than the RCBS bullet would. Then too, I couldn't prove it because, to my knowledge, there is no scale of "relative deadness." That is, where a 1 would be just "dead" and 2 would be "deader," 3 would be "stone dead" and so on. Comparing the .45-70 to a .375 H&H might create an inspired debate on the scale of deadness, where the .458 Lott would rate a 9 or 10, "stone cold dead" or "dead 'n buried." This could get outta hand.

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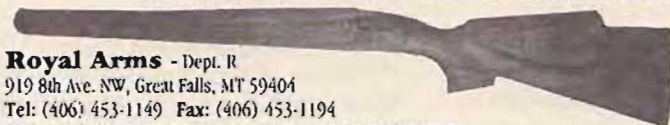
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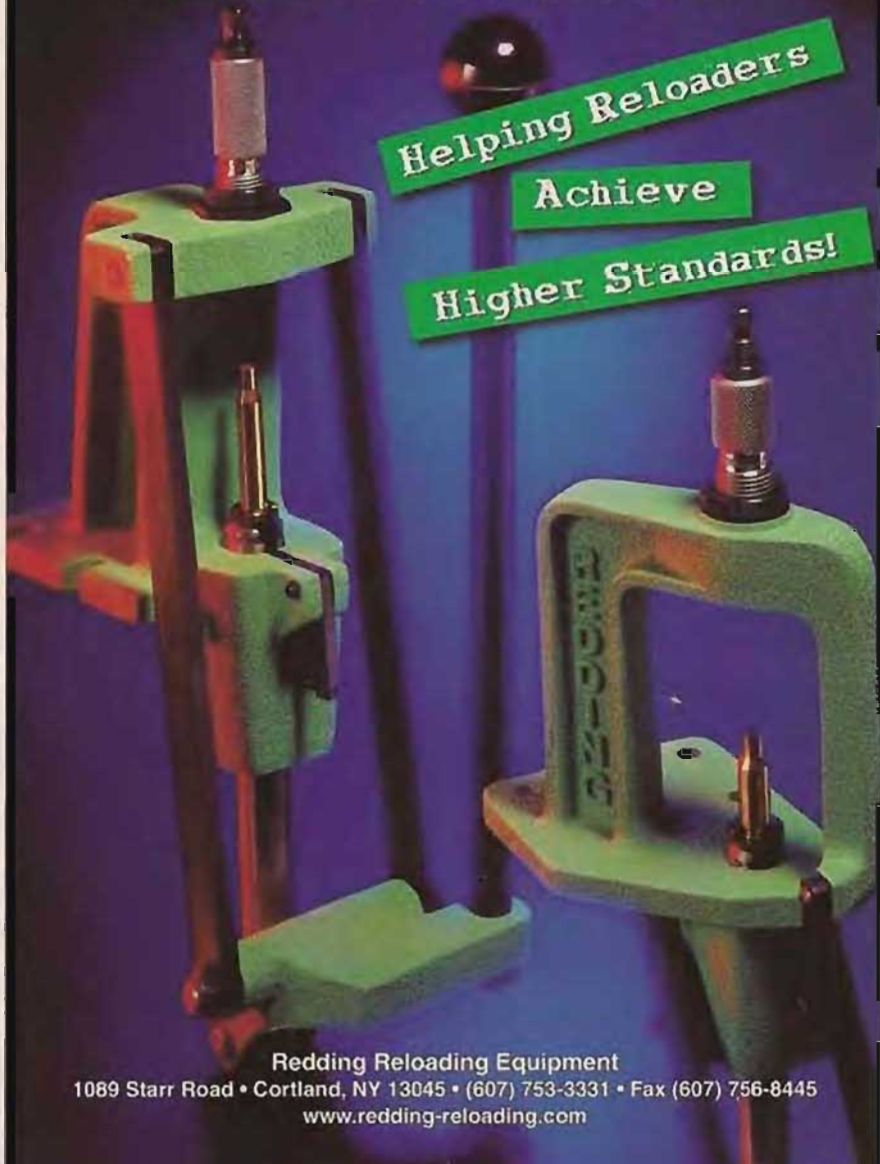
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Brian Pearce

Since its inception in 1935, the .357 Magnum has gained widespread popularity and has been offered in some of the finest revolvers ever produced. It was developed jointly by Smith & Wesson and Winchester and was intended to serve as a sixgun cartridge for hunting and law enforcement, but it is also a highly useful rifle round that offers economy and versatility.

easily the most popular, as it is priced competitively and is a simple, proven, rock-solid design. Most Model 94s will shoot somewhere between one- and 2½-inch groups at 100 yards, as long as the correct loads are used. Currently it is available with three barrel lengths including the Model 1894CP with a 16½-inch (ported) barrel, the 1894C with an 18½-inch barrel and the Cowboy with a 24-inch octagonal tube, each cut with a one-turn-in-16-inch, right-hand twist. Magazine tubes are full length and hold 8, 9 and 10 rounds, respectively.

The above rifles are now fitted with barrels featuring Ballard-type rifling, which is relatively new on Marlin leverguns appearing in the past few years and is designed to shoot cast bullets. On the other hand, there are probably more Marlin leverguns in use with

.357 Magnum

Compact power and accuracy.

The most common rifles encountered are handy American-made lever actions from Marlin, Winchester and replicas of the Winchester Models 1873 and 1892 that are generally produced by foreign manufacturers. These represent the majority of .357 Magnum-chambered long guns in the hands of shooters. There are, however, several single-shot rifles that have been offered periodically, including the Ruger No. 1, Browning Model 1885 and economically priced break open actions from Harrington & Richardson and New England Firearms. A variety of combination guns have been offered in this caliber, but leverguns are by far the most common.

Of the many .357 leverguns around, the Marlin Model 1894 is





Rifle

Over the past 25 years, Brian has hunted with a variety of .357 Magnum rifles including (left to right) original Winchester Model 1892 converted by P.O. Ackley, Browning Model 92, Rossi Model 92, Marlin Model 1894 and Marlin 1894 Cowboy.

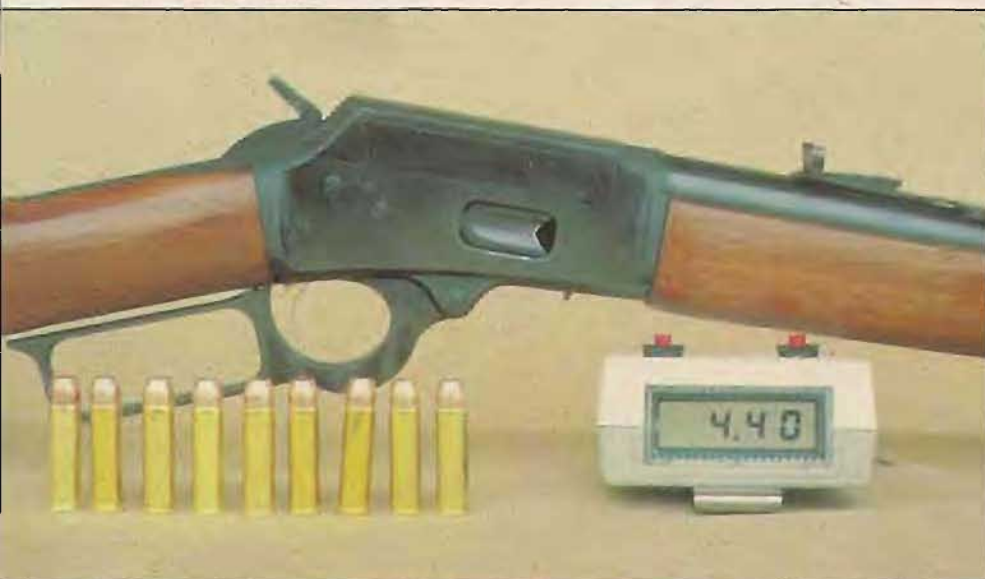


Micro-Groove® rifling, so a few remarks about these barrels seem appropriate.

This rifling system has been the victim of vicious rumors, leaving some owners with the impression they are lousy for cast bullets. Several times I have visited with Micro-Groove owners who claimed their guns wouldn't shoot cast bullets, but when they were quizzed on specific loads, they admitted they had never tried them but had been told they wouldn't work. This is unfortunate as the Micro-Groove rifling has the potential to be one of the best barrels for lead bullets, as distortion is minor, yet the barrel holds the bullet firmly. (Marlin rifles chambered in .22 LR and featuring the same rifling have a reputation for good accuracy with lead bullets.)

Granted some Marlin .357s shoot cast bullets well, while others are not so good. Several factors can affect how they perform, but the most common accuracy thief can usually be traced to the rather abrupt leade from the chamber into the rifling. Recutting this leade to 1½ degrees usually improves accuracy. Also, some Micro-Groove barrels are a bit rough, and fire lapping may be necessary to get them to perform up to snuff with

The .357 Magnum has become popular in lever-action rifles for home defense. With a little practice, most shooters can fire nine aimed shots in less than five seconds.



The .357 Magnum cartridge is popular with cowboy action shooters in leverguns and single-action revolvers, but it's also useful for hunting and defense. Here we have a Browning Model 92, a 2nd generation Colt Single Action and a Smith & Wesson Model 66.

cast bullets. For those who shoot jacketed bullets, the Micro-Groove rifling is generally accurate right out of the box, but the above "tune-up" procedure usually proves beneficial for them as well.

The Ballard rifling was brought back because of the trend toward cast bullets among shooters, hunters and cowboy action competitors. It gives good accuracy with any reasonable bullet but also gives outstanding results with jacketed versions. I have worked with several recent manufactured Ballard rifled Marlin guns chambered in .25-20 WCF, .32-20 WCF, .30 WCF, .38-55, .44 Magnum, .45 Colt and .45-70, and most will shoot

close to one inch at 100 yards with either cast or jacketed bullet ammunition. Recently I purchased a Marlin Model 1894 Cowboy in .357 Magnum that cuts ragged holes at 75 yards using the 158-grain Speer Gold Dot bullet driven 1,900 to 2,100 fps. It does almost that well with several cast bullets.

Micro-Groove rifling has the potential to be one of the best barrels for lead bullets.

The American-made Winchester Model 94, the Japanese Winchester (USRAC) Model 1892 and the discontinued Browning Model 92 feature rifling that works well with either cast or jacketed bullets, as does the Uberti manufactured Model 1873 Winchester replicas. I have had the opportunity to give each of the above a workout, and if time is taken to find the right load, each has proven capable of 1½-inch groups or smaller at 75 yards.

More than 20 years ago, I purchased a Browning Model 92 so chambered, and right out of the box, it would consistently group around one inch at 75 yards with loads employing either cast or jacketed bullets. A gun dealer offered me a ridiculously high price (It had an exceptionally well figured French walnut stock.), and I let it go but soon located another one and purchased it, which shot pretty much like the first.



Slow-burning magnum handgun powders offer top performance in .357 Magnum handloads.

Likewise the new USRAC Winchester Model 1892 is built on the same tooling and offers similar accuracy. While I have only tried one Model 94 and one Uberti 1873 in this caliber, both models have good reputations for accuracy among fellow shooters.

The above leverguns are fast handling and useful for many purposes, including taking small, edible game, personal defense or even hunting big game but must have the correct load for the purpose at hand. If we use .38 Special ammunition with 158-grain lead roundnose or semiwadcutter (SWC) style bullets, small game can be taken with minimal meat damage. The small charges of fast-burning powders found in non +P loads typically drive bullets around 950 fps, or about 175 to 200 fps

faster than the same load out of a revolver. These loads, especially the flatnosed SWC, anchor cottontail rabbits or grouse quickly, yet destroy little meat. The low velocity produces little blood shot; in other words, you can eat right up to the hole. While I always recommend using hearing protection, even when hunting if possible, in the event a shot is fired without, the muzzle report is by no means unpleasant, as pressures are low.

When we shift gears and begin using full-house .357 Magnum factory ammunition or high-performance handloads, these guns certainly change personalities and can take deer-sized game cleanly. Back in the late 1980s, my wife and I were hunting mule deer in Idaho, and a Browning Model 92 .357 Magnum was kept behind the seat

of the pickup, serving as a backup should something go awry with Susan's primary rifle, a scoped 7x57mm Mauser. She had been shooting the Browning regularly in casual practice or plinking sessions and could hit very well with it at 75 to 100 yards offhand.

A Browning Model 92 would consistently group around one inch at 75 yards.

For some unknown reason, when we left the pickup, she elected to take the Browning .357 Magnum, rather than the 7x57. Perhaps the light, easy-to-carry carbine appealed to her in the steep mountain terrain, or maybe the many plinking sessions gave her the confidence she wanted. At any rate the tubular magazine was filled with .357 handloads consisting of the 158-grain Speer jacketed softpoint bullet pushed with enough Hercules (now Alliant) 2400 powder to achieve 1,900 fps.

We had only hiked a mile or so when we spotted three deer, a small forked-horn buck and two dry does, on a distant hillside. We put the stalk on them, but they were alert and the only way we could get within range was to drop out of sight into a dry creek bed and ease up to a small ridge that would come out some 60 yards below them.

As we made the last 50 yards or so, we split up, and I came within

Some jacketed .357 Magnum bullets are too frangible when fired from a rifle, so choose bullets carefully.

There are a variety of factory loads that help the .357 Magnum's versatility: .38 Special loads work best on small table fare, while full-house magnums are better for deer-sized game or defense.





sight of the deer first, so just settled in the sagebrush and waited for my wife to get into position and attempt to take her first deer. (Even though season was open for either sex, I suggested she take a doe to allow the young buck to grow up.) She had a perfect broadside shot at something around 60 estimated yards, and I was in the unique position to see the shot fired with the doe facing me. The Speer bullet struck the shoulder and exited the other side, which put the deer down instantly. She managed to get up and take a couple wobbly steps then went down and expired.

Today's jacketed bullets are much better than any previous designs.

The wound channel was remarkable for such a small cartridge, and to avoid controversy I will not compare it to other deer rounds. But let's just say it was impressive for such a small cartridge, and I had a new respect for the .357 Magnum when fired from a rifle.

Since the above deer hunt, I have observed first-hand, or used myself, the .357 Magnum rifle on addi-



Most .357 Magnum lever-action rifles will function best if the overall cartridge length is kept to less than 1.605 inches.

tional mule deer, black bear and considerable small game including raccoons, skunks, beaver, badger and a handful of coyotes that were called within 150 yards. As long as the right bullets are used, the above performance is not a fluke.

It is by no means a large game cartridge for big bears, moose or elk, but for deer, antelope, javelina or similar game, it works reliably, as long as distances aren't too great. Just for the record, full-power .357 Magnum loads utilizing rapidly expanding bullets with a muzzle velocity of 1,800 to 2,100 fps will leave nothing but ears and feet to eat of small fare, such as cottontails.

A friend, now residing in Arizona, used a converted Winchester Model 92 .357 Magnum to great ex-

perience while living in a remote wilderness area of the southeastern U.S. in the early 1970s. He praised its versatility and handiness but also commented it was the "darndest killer for a small cased cartridge in a rifle he had ever seen." This man has hunted all over the world, lived and hunted in Africa for several years and has gained a wealth of knowledge of guns, bullets and cartridges.

My friend also reported giving a converted Model 92 .357, along with a supply of handloads using a 140-grain cast SWC (SAECO) bullet at 2,000 fps with a suitable charge of Hercules 2400, to a friend of his who lived in the same remote area. One evening while taking a walk, an old sow black bear charged him, and he managed to kill it instantly with a properly placed bullet from the .357 rifle at just a few feet. The bear's momentum knocked him down, and the bear landed on him. The .357 is not my choice if I were faced with an angry bear, but a correctly placed bullet certainly did the job.

Other uses for the .357 Magnum levergun include home defense or for travelers crossing states that prohibit non-residents from carrying a handgun in the vehicle. If a little time is spent learning defensive handling techniques, it is a highly effective tool, as it delivers substantially greater power than the revolver, is easy to shoot accurately and recoil is modest, allowing for fast follow-up shots.

Most experienced levergun shooters can usually place 10 shots into the "vitals" of a B27 man tar-

These groups fired at 75 yards show the potential accuracy of Marlin .357 Magnum rifles to be more than adequate for hunting small game and deer.



get at 30 feet in 4 to 6 seconds using full-power magnum ammunition. Those with advanced skills and good strength can place three shots into the "vital" area in around one second at across-the-room distances. More important I have observed individuals with only a "modest" level of rifle shooting skill clear a variety of steel targets in less time with a lever-action rifle or carbine than they could run the same course with a revolver, or even an autoloading pistol. And they are hitting the target with notably more power. (A seasoned handgun shot can easily exceed these times.)

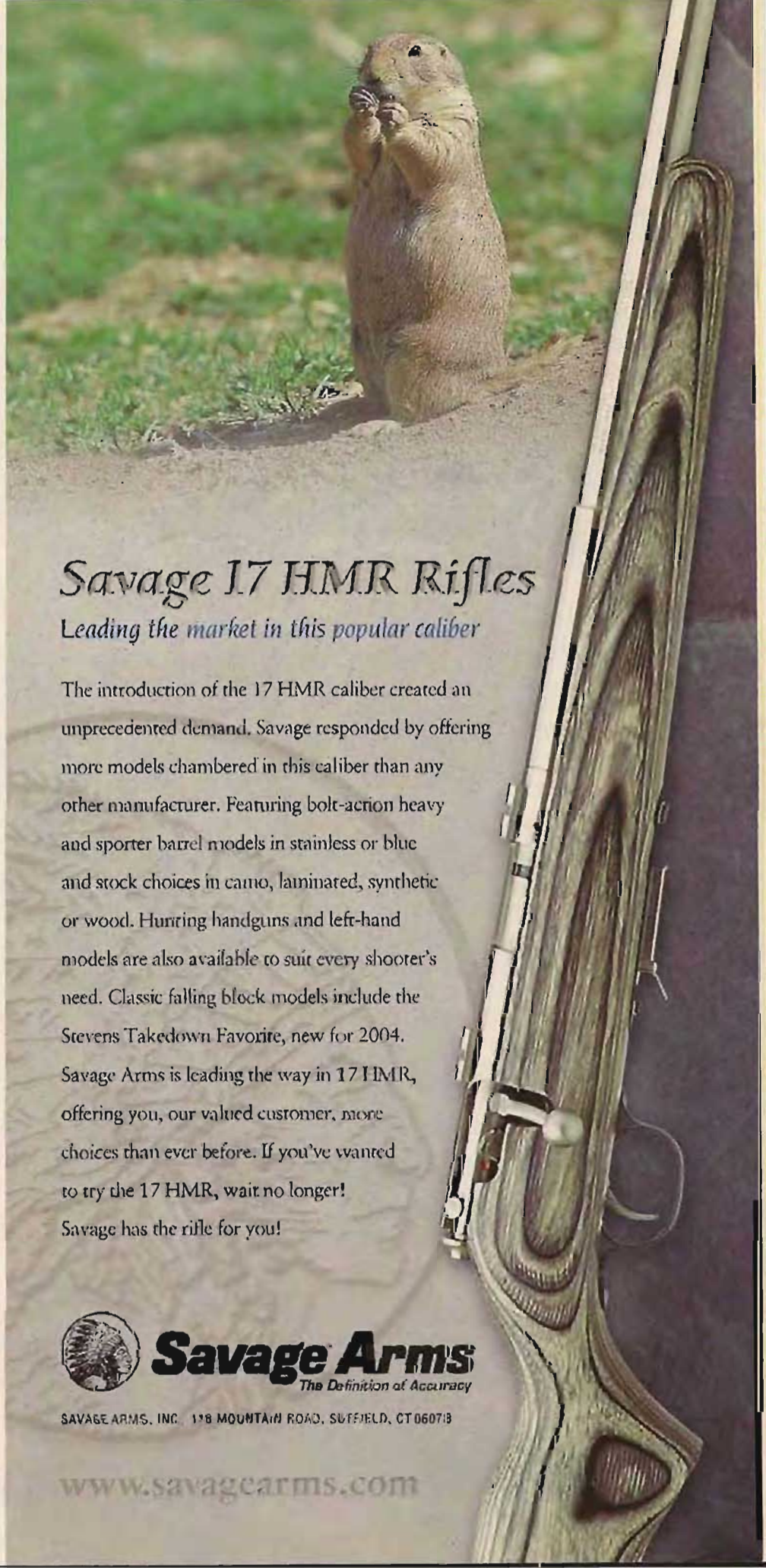
Some cowboy competitors have been reported to run 10-shot strings on a 12-inch steel plate at 12 yards in 2.5 to 3 seconds, but using ultralight .38 Special ammunition rather than full-power magnum loads and in leverguns that have been tuned and short-stroked specifically for speed shooting. (At another time we will discuss some of the custom work that can be done to leverguns to improve them for personal defense that includes speed shooting-type sights, light bars, lasers, action work and take-downs. At the least, most rifles will likely need minor action or tune-up work to assure reliable feeding when quickly running the action.)

Over the years I have known several law enforcement personnel who have used a .357 Magnum levergun for dispatching wounded game and livestock that had been injured by vehicles and in finishing gunfights with felons. The effectiveness of these little guns cannot be overstated.

FAVORITE BULLETS AND LOADS

I like cast bullets in .357 Magnum rifles, as they are inexpensive to produce, easy on bores and, if designed with a flat nose, produce remarkable shock and penetration on game and are rarely recovered on deer or black bear. The ones I have used most include Lyman mould 358156 in both solid and hollowpoint configurations with a gas check. Some guns will give good results with the RCBS 150-KT, which usually casts around 155

May-June 2004



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grains from my mould and alloy, and is a plain-base design. Both bullets feature a nose length of less than .315 inch and will usually feed without altering the action of a levergun. In other words, bullets with longer noses usually require the action to be modified to feed or allow cartridges to function through the action.

Another cast bullet that is designed specifically for hunting big game is the Cast Performance 180-grain wide flatnose (WFN) gas check, which has given no problems in feeding and can easily be driven 1,800 to 1,900 fps. If forced to use this cartridge on heavy-structured game, such as black bear, this bullet is a top choice.

Today's jacketed bullets are much better than any previous designs, and I'm especially impressed with the 158-grain Speer Gold Dot hollowpoint that is available to handloaders and is offered in factory loads from Speer, Black Hills and Buffalo Bore. It has given remarkable accuracy, expands easily, yet its electro-chemical bonded jacket keeps the bullet in tact, controls expansion and provides reliable penetration. Recently I shot a large wild dog that had been killing deer and livestock; it weighed in excess of 125 pounds. The distance was around 120 yards, and the Speer Gold Dot, with a muzzle velocity of over 2,000 fps, entered at the shoulder and exited the offside near the flank, killing him almost instantly. I would confidently hunt deer with this same load.

A couple years back, I tried samplings of .357 Magnum factory loads in a Smith & Wesson Model 586 .357 Magnum revolver with a 6-inch barrel and a Marlin 1894CS .357 Magnum with an 18½-inch

Micro-Groove barrel. With factory loads using bullets weighing 125, 140 and 158 grains, the rifle produced between 400 and 640 fps more velocity than the revolver; 125-grain loads from Remington and Black Hills went 2,170 and 2,040 fps, respectively, from the rifle. The average velocity from 158-grain jacketed loads from Black Hills, Hornady, Remington and Winchester went 1,728 fps. I have always wished the factory loads were a trifle faster and have relied on handloads to achieve 1,900 fps or more with various 158-grain jacketed (and cast) bullets.

Recently I was sent samples of new .357 Magnum factory loads from Buffalo Bore Ammunition (PO Box 40, Carmen ID 83462; www.buffalobore.com) and was thrilled to find it offers a new level of performance for this cartridge in both rifles and handguns. Its 158-grain jacketed hollow cavity (JHC) load achieved a remarkable muzzle velocity of 2,084 fps from an 18½-inch barrel and 2,175 fps from a 24-inch Marlin Cowboy. The 180-grain lead flatnose gas check achieved 1,866 fps (18½-inch barrel) and 1,908 fps from the Cowboy. In a Ruger GP-100 with a 4-inch barrel, the 158-grain load produced 1,473 fps, while the 180-grain cast load went 1,412 fps; in a Ruger Bisley with a 7½-inch barrel, these two loads clocked 1,550 fps and 1,473 fps, respectively. These are the fastest (please note I didn't say hottest) .357 loads I have ever tried, including high-pressure loads from the 1960's era. The jacketed load easily kept five shots under one inch at 75 yards, even with a hot barrel, while the cast bullet load stayed within 1½ inches. The remarkable thing about these new loads is they are within today's pressure limits of 35,000 psi (thanks to a new powder) and function flawlessly in a variety of .357 revolvers - even some that have been sensitive (or unreliable) with full-power loads.

I can't help but point out that the above loads are fully equal to .30-30 Winchester factory loads. The 150- and 170-grain loads from Rem-

(Continued on page 98)

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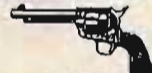
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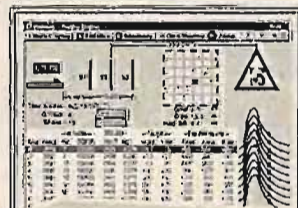
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.357 Magnum Rifle

(Continued from page 64)

ington, Winchester, Federal and Hornady were tried from a Winchester Model 94 with a 20-inch barrel and a Marlin 336A with a 24-inch barrel. On average the Model 94 drove 150-grain loads 2,187 fps and 170-grain loads 2,001 fps, while the Marlin achieved 2,267 and 2,080 fps, respectively.

Some may be quick to point out that the .30-30 has longer bullets with better ballistic coefficient, which is true, but most game taken with an iron-sighted levergun is close enough that this advantage is unimportant. On the other hand, the .357 Magnum's larger caliber is producing tremendous shock and may be why this little cartridge kills out of proportion to its size and ballistics.

Space is short and won't allow a detailed discussion of .357 Magnum handloads, but for full-house loads, Hodgdon Lil'Gun, H-110, Alliant 2400, Winchester 296 and Vihtavuori N110 will give excellent results with cast or jacketed bullets weighing 150 to 180 grains. For example 16.6 grains of W-296 will push a 158-grain Hornady XTP 1,826 fps from an 18½-inch Marlin barrel, while 15.2 grains of Alliant 2400 will drive a 158-grain Speer Gold Dot to essentially the same velocity.

Another high-velocity load consists of 19.0 grains of Hodgdon Lil'Gun with the Speer 158-grain bullet for over 2,000 fps. The 165-grain Thompson cast bullet, Lyman mould 358156, can be pushed around 1,900 fps using 15.0 grains of Alliant 2400. The 180-grain WFN GC bullet from Cast Performance can achieve over 1,800 fps using 15.5 grains of Hodgdon Lil'Gun. Each of the above loads has produced good accuracy in a variety of rifles.

If you have a .357 Magnum rifle, put it to work, as it is comparatively inexpensive to shoot, versatile and mighty handy. And even though it's small for a rifle cartridge, it behaves as if it were much larger.