

Grizzly Cartridge Company



Purveyors of Premium Pistol Provender

Hamilton Bowen

Back in the Good Ole Days, the numerous major cartridge companies offered cartridges of every description in every caliber you had ever heard of and some you had not. There were premium-quality hunting loads, mid-range target loads, reduced-power practice loads, light-bullet loads, heavy-bullet loads, left-handed shooter loads and so on.

Those days are largely past due to insufficient demand to profitably make and sell such an enormous range of munitions. But the good news is that the Good Ole Days are here again, thanks to the advent of the small specialty ammunition companies which have stepped into the breach to produce limited-demand cartridges. Some of the niches are pretty small but active enough to sustain any of a number of specialty makers such as Garrett, Cor-Bon and Black Hills. But not all the niches are covered and yet another, Grizzly Cartridge Company, has risen to the occa-



sion to fill in a few more of the gaps.

Dedicated To Excellence

A quick perusal of the informative Grizzly Cartridge Company Web site shows the firm's clear focus on high-performance revolver and lever gun cartridges with 10 different revolver chamberings in a total of 36 different loadings. There are six alone for the .500 S&W ranging from a shootable 350-grain jacketed-bullet loading at 1,350 fps to the scary-sounding 440-grain cast-bullet load making 1,550 fps.

Not every client is interested in a steady diet of the 440-grain wrath-of-God munitions when you can practice with a 350-grain load. Perhaps the most important and useful of the Grizzly offerings are the 300- to 325-grain bullet loadings in the .44 Magnum and .45 Colt, calibers that the vast majority of revolver shooters favor. There aren't any gaps in the lineup.

From chatting with Mike Rintoul, the firm's founder and

guiding light, it's also clear there aren't any gaps in his approach to the development and production of his ammunition. Even the boxes are exceptional pieces of graphic art and not something to toss at the end of the day. An instrument engineer by training and occupation, Mike has devoted considerable time, energy and skill to making every cartridge. Two basic notions guide his efforts: close attention to detail and first-quality components.

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maximum possible bullet crimp and crimp consistency, critical to both accuracy and dependability with propellants typical of magnum revolver cartridges. Three-hundred-grain bullet .44 Magnum ammunition brutalized in an M329 Smith & Wesson PD exhibited minimal bullet creep, a credit to excellent loading techniques. Propellants cannot be chosen lightly, especially for serious hunting ammunition. Aside from the obvious need for reliable ignition, propellants must give the same pressures in all weathers, whether bone-chilling Alaska interior cold or West Texas pick-up truck dashboard hot. Otherwise, the point of impact of bullets fired in the bush may differ wildly from "sunny and 72 degrees" results at the public range. Grizzly Cartridge Company ammunition is extreme-temperature tested to assure its consistency.

Furthermore, each lot of ammunition is pressure tested and assigned a lot number. At any point in the future, if any component change is made, the resulting new lot of ammunition is retested. Records are made and kept of the results so that the performance of each lot can be compared against the standards and pressure specs for that specific cartridge loading to ascertain that every cartridge is as similar as possible, from lot to lot. Consistency may be the hobgoblin of little minds but it is also the hallmark of great ammunition. A lot of trouble, to be sure, but these procedures make for superior quality and demonstrate the Grizzly Cartridge Company's dedication to excellence.

Components are as important as attention to detail in the production of premium-quality revolver ammunition. No stinting on quality in these cartridges. Brass for most cartridges is from Starline, though Hornady provides the .475 and .500 Linebaugh cases. In either case, it is of excellent quality and typically very consistent in neck-wall thickness, a dimension critical to good accuracy. Along with uneven case mouths from repeated loading or poor trimming, uneven neck tension from uneven brass thickness in cartridge necks is deadly, causing erratic ignition and irregular



bullet release from shot to shot.

Bullet For Your Buck

Grizzly loads premium-quality bullets in these cases. Hawk Precision Bullets supplies the jacketed projectiles while Cast Performance Bullets provides the cast ones. Hawk bullets feature soft copper jackets and lead cores, which offer useful expansion at handgun velocities. Hawk's theory of bullet construction is that hard jackets fail to stretch and support the soft cores, which leads to jacket and core separations and weight loss. The bullet's enviable reputation and per-

formance in the field on big game provides considerable empirical evidence in support of the design.

The Cast Performance bullets are all gas checked which helps minimize leading in guns where cylinder throats and barrel groove diameters are less than optimal. These bullets are extremely tough and hard without excessive brittleness and shoot exceedingly well. Just bear in mind that cast bullet alloys are always a compromise — it is possible to shoot any hard-cast bullet fast enough to cause failures in the form of deformation or fragmentation when heavy

Grizzly has a solid lineup of hard-hitting calibers.



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bones are hit which limit penetration and effectiveness. What that velocity is is difficult to quantify but reports from the field suggest that velocities exceeding 1,300-1,400 fps may be it. Bear in mind that cast bullets are no substitute for a true solid bullet. This is a largely academic discussion since cast bullet failure with high-quality bullets rarely occurs on thin-skinned game but it bears contemplation never the less. For most of us, cast bullets are the workhorse bullet of revolvers.

Performance Based

All this sounds well enough. So how does Grizzly ammo perform? Alas, we were unable to try the ammunition afield but, in view of the reputation of Cast Performance cast and Hawk jacketed bullets, results on game are fairly predictable. Within the limitations of the power of the cartridges, Grizzly ammo will compile an excellent record in time.

On the other hand, range testing we could do.

One of life's little inequities for gun and cartridge manufacturers is that, far too often, mere mortals test their excellent wares, usually some middle-age cooter that, at one time, might have been a passable shot. Unfortunately, most of these cooters, if they ever could shoot well in the first place, typically suffer from failing eyesight and have long ago done their best shooting. But, to borrow a notion from Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, you fight the war at hand with what you have on hand. Never the less, peering through bifocals as I do, results made me look near clear-eyed.

Most of the .44 Magnum Ammo went down range through an M329 S&W to test for bullet creep and, in deference to tired elbows, were fired off-hand, never a truly fair way to evaluate ammo's accuracy. Serious bench testing, on the other hand, was conducted in a relatively stock Ruger .45 Bisley with iron sights and a 5 1/2" barrel. Results were impressive. Groups typically hovered in the 1 1/2"-1 1/4" range, provided the ole eyes and ambient light cooperated at all. My guess is that, with a scope, this gun would put five 300-grain cast bullets in less than an inch. As far as I am concerned, any gun and ammunition combination that will do so is a remarkable gun and one to be treasured.

Firing the 300-grain WFNGC bullet load with an advertised velocity of 1,200 fps yielded an average velocity of 1,050 fps in the 4" M329 and 1,190 fps in an 8 1/2" M29, about that one would expect with these barrel lengths. Extreme spreads were 18 and 40 fps respectively with standard deviations of 6.9 and 15.1, exceptionally consistent. Oddly, the short barrel proved the

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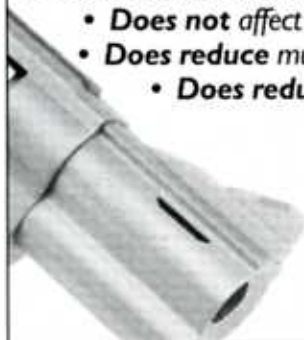
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better numbers of the two. The 5/8" .45 Colt Bisley fired with the 300-grain LFNGC bullet produced an average velocity of 1,305 fps, more than the 1,250 fps listed on the box. Standard deviation was 13 fps with an extreme spread of 37 fps. Again, an exceptionally consistent performance. All of which goes to show that every gun is a law unto itself.

In all cases, powder burned cleanly with minimal residue. Thanks to gas-checked bullets, the .45 barrel was cleaner at the end of the test than when we started. All in all, an excellent performance. At the time of testing, we did not have any completed guns in which to try the .475 and .500 Linebaugh ammo but, if tests with the .44 Magnum and .45 Colt heavy-bullet loadings are any indicator, these will perform as well.

One general caution about high-performance ammunition is in order. +P+ Grizzly .45 Colt ammo will chamber in both the Ruger 'New Vaquero' and the venerable Colt single-action style revolvers. While the Ruger might survive a few of these cartridges, a Colt most likely will not. If I could offer one constructive criticism of this ammo, the .45 Colt cartridges need to be about .050 longer to preclude use in these guns. Neither should the Grizzly +P+ .45-70 ammunition be fired in Trap-door Springfield or any vintage single or lever-action rifle.

For a newcomer, Grizzly Cartridge Company has made an impressive debut. Their lineup of offerings covers the spectrum of hunting revolver munitions as well as anybody's and better than most. As time passes, Mike Rintoul's ammo will turn up in belt loops and ammo pouches more and more, mute testimony to his simple but effective recipe for brewing great ammunition: attention to detail and first-class ingredients.

MORE INFORMATION

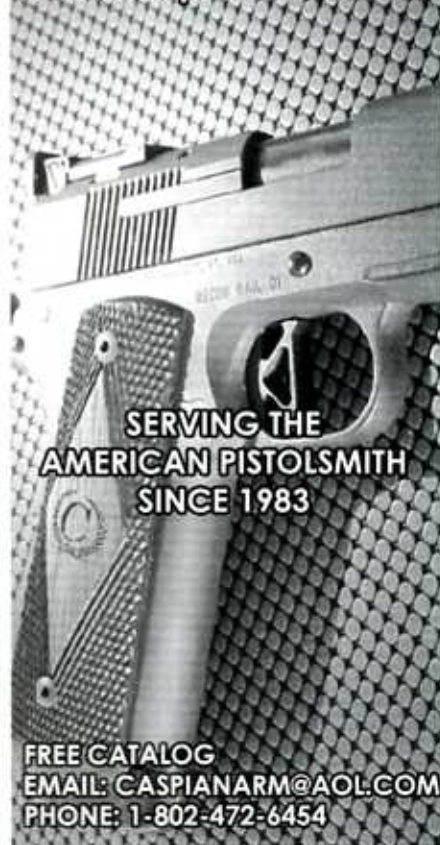
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The New
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Hot, Heavy And Handsome!

The .44 Magnum cartridge was big news at its introduction in 1956. It propelled a 250-grain bullet at 1,300+ FPS, far more potent than anything else available at the time. These figures sound so quaint now compared to the .454 Casull, .475 and .500 Linebaughs and .500 Smith & Wesson cartridges, all capable of generating twice as much horsepower.

But for many of us, nuclear levels of revolver performance are neither necessary nor manageable. All we really need is ammo that will do the job with the guns we have. No telling who was the first sensible chap to recognize in the lowly .44 Magnum the solution to the problem. J. D. Jones may be the real culprit but Randy Garrett was also on the case early on. Both rightly recognized that the .44 Magnum loaded to sensible pressure levels with 300- to 325-grain bullets, was a serious cartridge, and kept the venerable .44 Magnum in the hunt in the face of more formidable developments. Owners of countless .44 Magnum revolvers thank you, whoever you are.

Not content to lounge on his laurels, Garrett has introduced an updated version of his +P+ Long Hammerhead .44 round. Otherwise identical to the orig-


inal, the latest iteration sports gas-checked bullets to combat leading that occasionally occur even with the best bullets. Fourteen-hundred FPS is cooking for a 330-grain cast bullet. Unless a revolver has perfectly sized throats and slick bores, the heat, pressures and gas leakage can cause barrel leading. Nothing can wreck accuracy quicker. Nothing stops the problem better than gas checks. A gas-checked version of the 310-grain loading will follow shortly.

Plenty accurate before, the ammo will keep producing good groups. Testing in a stock 7½" stainless Redhawk produced outstanding performance. One six-shot group landed in 1½" while another had five more or less in one hole with the sixth about an inch out due to the excitement and

amazement of the shooter (not your blind contributing author).

Garrett bullets are hand-cast, water-dropped with alloys tailored to give maximum resistance to shattering and deformation. A lot of trouble but it makes for a superior bullet. Bullet-to-bullet weight is typically +/- 1/2 grain.

Long Hammerhead ammo is suitable only to Dan Wesson and

Ruger .44 double-action revolvers since it works at 43,500 CUPs. For S&W's and Ruger's single-action revolvers, the standard Hammerhead 310-grain ammo, working at 38,000 CUPs, is best. Both sell for \$65 per 50, a true bargain for hunters who have trekked thousands of miles for the shot of a lifetime or outdoorsman who ventures into bear country and may depend on this ammo for safety and preservation. 

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