

## Notes on the Care and Feeding of Lever Guns #6



Handloaders have to make a great many decisions when figuring out what to load. The first decision, I think, should be based upon what purpose you are loading the cartridge. Are you hunting, practicing, bench rest target shooting, etc.

Even though they can be marvelously accurate, Big Horn Armory's lever action guns are primarily hunting guns, so I will focus on that aspect. The next choice to be made in this progression, is what are you hunting? Are you hunting medium size "Large game" like deer or large dangerous game, typified by Cape buffalo, or something in between like elk, moose or bison. BHA's Model 89 can be loaded specifically for all of these due to the versatility of the big bore cartridge.

Hunting thin skinned animals like deer and antelope is generally done best with an expanding bullet type. This ensures maximum energy transfer inside the narrow body before the bullet exits.

Larger, tougher animals usually requires a non-expanding bullet to get adequate penetration and to ensure that the bullet stays on its intended path should it hit hard bone. The .500 caliber Hard Cast Lead and Mono-metal solids tend to break bone and continue on the same path rather than deflect off line. Softer expanding bullets tend to deflect when they hit big bone, sometimes enough to miss the vitals.

Some other considerations regarding bullet choice come to mind. A customer recently inquired about bullets for his M89B in 475 Linebaugh. He was concerned about the lack of

jacketed bullets available for use with his Bower Suppressor. He found two Speer Deepcurl bullets, a 275 gr plated hollow point and a 400 gr plated, jacketed soft point. He mentioned a Barnes 275 gr XPB. Also discovered was a group of Hawk bullets ranging from 265 gr to 600 gr. He had heard that they have soft, formed gilding metal jackets and worried that they might not hold up to rifle velocities.

He told me that case powder capacities generally limit him to 1400-1500 fps. My counsel to him was that the plated bullets are a concern because 1100-1200 fps is near the ballpark limit for this type of bullet. Plated bullets tend to shed plating material or come apart starting at around 1100 fps. This, of course, depends on the plating material and its thickness. The Barnes should present no problems, but is a bullet lighter than he would prefer.

That leaves the Hawk bullets. While soft by design (this encourages controlled expansion), they offer two different jacket thicknesses (.025" & .035") and should be adequate for his purposes. Since Hawk will place a cannelure on the bullet, putting a strong roll crimp on the cartridge is not a problem. Cartridges for tube magazine lever guns require a strong roll crimp to keep the bullet in place. If loading a bullet without a cannelure, one would try the strong roll crimp and test for consistent velocity and accuracy. If velocity and accuracy are not good, then back off the roll crimp in small increments until velocities are consistent.