

Caliber Comparison: 50 Beowulf vs **.500 Auto Max**

Many people think the 500 Auto Max (500 AM) and the 50 Beowulf are similar cartridges. The similarity ends with a common bullet diameter. The three major differences are power, reliable extraction, and ammunition availability.

Factory load muzzle energy for the 500 AM reaches into the 4000+ ft-lb range. This is more than double most 50 Beowulf factory loads at around 2000 ft-lbs. Handloaders of the 500 AM can achieve greater power with 4600+ ft-lbs. Or they can load this down to around 1200 ft-lbs. The longer, straight wall case allows for great versatility and allows the use of bullet weights ranging from 200 grains to 700 grains. The best the Beowulf can do is just under 2400 ft-lbs and a larger than 400-grain bullet would use so much case capacity as to be useless.

Our AR500 is equipped with an adjustable gas block that allows easy tuning for the whole range of 500 Auto Max ammunition. The 50 Beowulf uses a fixed gas block.

The 500 Auto Max uses a rim that is slightly smaller than the case diameter. Along with the larger AR10 bolt, this allows a larger extractor claw to provide reliable removal of fired cases, even when maximum loads are used. The smaller AR15 bolt and extractor along with the rebated 50 Beowulf rim can make for difficult extraction when maximum loads are used. Dirty chambers also make for unreliable extraction in the 50 Beowulf.

Ammunition is much more available for the 500 Auto Max. Four factories currently supply the market. Buffalo Bore, Steinel, Underwood, and Colorado Cartridge provide over twenty different loadings. Current listings show only four different loads from only two manufacturers for the Beowulf.

Handloaders for the Auto Max can use bullets in the 450 to the 700-grain range. These large bullets take up too much case capacity in the Beowulf to be useful. These larger bullets, along with the greater power of the 500 Auto Max, make it capable of taking the largest, most dangerous game animals on earth. What's special about the Auto Max is that the shooter can tailor their bullet choice to whatever they are going to hunt.

New brass for the Beowulf is almost 13 percent more expensive than 500 Auto Max brass and the Auto Max brass is considerably more durable. This makes the Auto Max much cheaper to hand load.

While they both are used in AR-style platforms, the 500 Auto Max is fired from an AR10 and the Beowulf uses an AR15. The weight of the AR10 platform along with a heavy buffer, stronger recoil spring, and thick recoil pad helps tame the massive power of the 500 Auto Max. The felt recoil on both guns is about the same.

Overall, the comparison is heavily weighted towards the AR500 in 500 Auto Max. The Beowulf can't come close in terms of power, cost, ammunition availability, and controllability.



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