

Optic Options for your Big Horn Armory Lever Action Rifle

If your last experience with an optic for your lever action rifle was one of the older, fixed power scout scopes, you're missing out. There are many different optical sight options that are fantastic for use on Big Horn Armory lever actions. Between the latest scout scopes and enclosed emitter red dots, there are some exceptionally durable and capable options that are sure to be perfect for your application. Don't believe us? Read on and see for yourself.

Any type of optical sight you can think of is available for lever actions. This means scout scopes, red dot sights, micro red dot sights, and enclosed emitter red dot sights. (We're going to leave holographic sights off the list because their height is mostly designed for use on ARs and it creates a "chin weld" rather than a cheek weld.) But not all options are equal for all applications.



Scout Scopes:

Scout scopes were popularized by the late Col. Cooper for use on his Scout Rifle concept, but there are examples of this type of scope going back to WWII when the

Germans fielded an example on their Kar 98s. A scout scope is just like a normal rifle scope except for the critical difference of eye relief. There is a much longer eye relief because the scout scope is mounted forward of the receiver. Most scout scopes are based on one” tubes. The most notable scout scope manufacturers are Burris, Leupold, and Vortex. Scout scopes can be had in fixed or variable power options.

Pro: Magnification, which is going to help with precise shot placement. Even a small amount of magnification can extend your effective range. The front sight can cover up, or subtend for you scope junkies, quite a bit of the target at 100yds and beyond.

Con: There is a reason they are not referred to as “reflex sights.” Target acquisition isn’t as quick as it is with a red dot or open sights.

Best Application: Hunting applications where you’re going to shoot beyond 100yds.



Red Dots:

While it may look like a juxtaposition of technology, red dot sights are excellent for lever action rifles. They are great for quick target acquisition, are durable because they and their parts are lighter than scopes, have a great field of view, and can easily be shot with both eyes open. These sights have a diode that emits a red or green dot that is reflected onto a lens in your field of view. Put the dot, which is your aiming point, on the target and fire. You can find these dots in various sizes to fit your needs. The size is measured in MOA. If a red dot has a 4MOA dot, the dot will cover 4" of the target at 100yds. Some models, like the Leupold RDS, will require scope rings to mount on the scope mounting rail, while others like the Aimpoint Micro H-2 have an integral mount built into the body of the sight. These are compact when compared to a scope and can be a great option for many applications.

Pros: They are great for quick target acquisition and are lighter than scopes.

Con: No magnification so they are better suited to short or mid-range applications.

Best Application: Hunting in short to mid-range applications where quick target acquisition is required.



Micro red dots:

Micro dots have become all the rage on handguns and rightfully so because they are small, light, and durable. These same qualities make them an excellent choice for use on short, quick-handling rifles as well. Like red dot sights, micro red dots have a diode that projects a dot onto a lens as an aiming point. The difference is that the diode is not contained inside the tube and micro dots only have one lens. This is what makes them so small and so light. It is also what makes them not necessarily perfect for all applications because if anything like water, snow, mud, or debris gets between the diode and the lens, no dot which means no aiming point. That's not to say it happens often, but it is something to consider. That said, micro dots could be a fine choice for a lever action rifle. Mounting these on a rail is simple. Most have a Picatinny mount or base available. Simply position it on the rail where you want and torque the clamp to the proper specs. Micro red dots are available with different dot sizes measured in MOA.

Pros: Their small size makes them very unobtrusive; they have an easy-to-see aiming point and are great for rapid target acquisition.

Con: The exposed diode can get blocked in foul weather or with mud or debris.

Best Application: Short to mid-range hunting or target shooting applications.



Enclosed Microdot:

Let's be honest, these look a bit like a mini mailbox clamped onto a gun. They're sort of a hybrid of traditional tubular red dot sights and micro red dots. Their funky appearance is because the design has some of the advantages of red dots and micro dots while minimizing the disadvantages. These are essentially an enclosed micro red dot, thus the name enclosed emitter nomenclature. The emitter or diode is enclosed in a housing and with an additional lens between the emitter and the shooter. This protects the emitter from water, mud, or debris. This prevents the aiming dot from being covered up at an inopportune time. Additionally, the controls are easier to manipulate than on a micro red dot because they're more accessible. Mounting is just like a micro red dot; just make sure you have the Picatinny adapter mount and clamp it onto the rail at the desired location.

Pros: Protected aiming point, yet still small enough to mount on just about any handgun.

Con: They are a bit larger and more obtrusive than micro red dots. No magnification.

Best Application: Short to mid-range hunting in areas where foul weather is expected.



Summary:

Optics for lever actions are no longer just relegated to forward-mounted scout scopes. The various red dot sight options are great choices for short to mid-hunting because of their quick target acquisition, durability, and ease of use in low light. They can easily extend your effective range, and in the case of the red dots, even speed up target acquisition for a follow-up shot if necessary. If you're thinking about an optical sight for your Big Horn Armory lever action, give these sights some consideration.



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