



Why the Best Timber Rifle is Short, Heavy, and Chambered Big

In close cover, the shot is fast, the range is short, and the rifle spends far more time in your hands than at your shoulder. Here is the practical case for the big-bore lever gun in dense timber.

There is a kind of country every serious hunter eventually meets. The alder hells of the Alaska coast. The cedar swamps where a northern whitetail simply vanishes. The blackberry bottoms and river-choked thickets where a boar hog beds down at midday. In that country, the rules change.

The shot, when it comes, is close. Often inside seventy-five yards. Sometimes inside twenty. It comes fast, through a

window in the brush that may stay open for a second and a half. And in between those rare, sudden moments, you are not shooting at all. You are carrying through wet timber that snatches at the muzzle, over blowdown, up a cutbank slick with leaves.

For more than a century, the hunters who worked this ground reached for the same tool: a short, powerful lever-action carbine. They did not carry it out of

nostalgia. They carried it because, in thick cover, it outperformed everything else in their hands. Modern steel and a genuine big-bore cartridge have only widened that advantage. Three field realities explain why.

The Rifle You Carry Far More Than You Shoot

Count the seconds you spend actually aiming on a timber hunt, then count the hours you spend packing the rifle to get there. The honest math explains why length and balance matter more in close cover than almost anywhere else.

A big-bore lever carbine with an 18-inch barrel comes to the shoulder in one motion and clears brush that a longer rifle hangs up on. There is no bolt handle to snag, no long tube to fight when you pivot toward movement at your three o'clock. The flat receiver rides easily in the crook of your arm, mile after mile. When the cover is close, and the clock is short, a rifle you can move fast is a rifle that fills tags.

Some of this country you cannot walk into at all; you fly it, ride in on horseback, or run a jet boat to the last gravel bar. A rifle that separates into two short sections and rides inside a pack or a scabbard is no luxury there. It is the difference between bringing the big gun and leaving it home.

When the Shot Is Measured in Heartbeats

Glass is a wonderful thing in the open. In the timber, at spitting distance, in the grey light under a canopy, a scope can cost you the animal; too much magnification, too little field of view, or a black picture at the worst possible moment.

This is the home ground of the aperture sight. A rear ghost-ring and a clean front post let the eye do what it does naturally: center the target and go. There is nothing to focus on, nothing to dial. For the hunter who prefers a red dot, a receiver drilled and tapped at the factory accepts a Leupold DeltaPoint, a Sig Romeo1, or a Trijicon RMR, putting an illuminated aiming point on the target with both eyes open. Either way, the sighting system is built for speed at the range where timber hunting actually happens.

Why Moderate Range Belongs to the Big Bore

Here is the part that surprises people. In thick cover, you do not need a flat-shooting magnum, because you will seldom take a flat, far shot. What you need is authority at moderate range, a heavy bullet of large frontal area that drives deep and puts its energy where it counts.

That is precisely what the .500 S&W Magnum was built to do. A wide, heavy .50-caliber bullet does not rely on velocity

tricks. It relies on mass and diameter, opening a large wound channel and penetrating through heavy shoulder bone on the biggest game on the continent. Inside a couple hundred yards, the entire world of the timber hunter, that is the ballistic profile you want. The long-range magnum's advantages never come into play here; the big bore's advantages are in play on every shot.

A Rifle Built for Exactly This Country

Everything above describes a category. One rifle was engineered, feature for feature, to fill it: the [Big Horn Armory Model 89 Take Down in .500 S&W Magnum](#).

Consider how neatly the specification maps to the problem. The 18-inch barrel and the large, curved lever, sized to work with gloved hands, make it quick in close cover. The factory aperture sights, with optional red-dot mounting, answer the speed problem. The .500 S&W chambering answers the energy problem. And the take-down design, built on John Browning's 1905 patent and rendered in modern 17-4PH stainless steel, lets the whole rifle break into two short sections for the pack-in, then lock back together on a full-height row of splines that resist movement in every direction, almost as

though the rifle were a single piece of steel.

This is not our claim alone. Reviewing the Model 89 Take Down Carbine, [American Hunter](#) noted that its salt-bath-nitrided surfaces, hardened to a remarkable Rockwell C 82, should resist the scars of scraping brush and rough transport, and judged the rifle able to take “most anything roaming the North American continent.” For a rifle whose whole purpose is to be dragged through wet, punishing cover and still perform, that is the testimony that counts.

For hunters who want the same platform in a different chambering, the family extends to the [Model 90 in .460 S&W Magnum](#) and the [Model 90A in .454 Casull](#), the same lever-action virtues and the same close-cover manners, in the caliber that suits the country and the game.



Built from the ground up in Cody, Wyoming, these are working rifles for hunters who go where the cover is thickest. In the timber, that is where the advantage has always been.



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