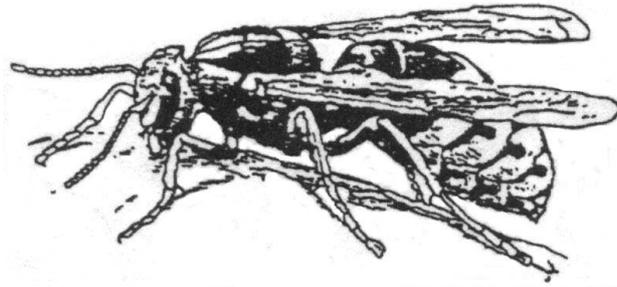


THE 22 HORNET

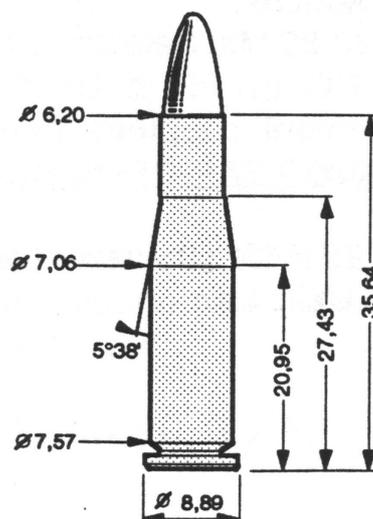


Old soldiers never die. So is the 22 Hornet cartridge. Its revival is the consequence of the creation, years ago, of the Field Pistol shooting discipline in metallic silhouette competitions. But how was it designed?

Back in 1885, the Winchester firm markets a new cartridge : the 22 Winchester Center Fire (WCF). It was chambered in the then brand new single shot rifle of the company, the 1885 Model. This falling block rifle is best known as the Winchester High Wall or Low Wall, according to the height of the receiver. First loaded with black powder, the 22 WCF was later filled with nitro powder but kept unchanged ballistics. It was discontinued in 1936.

The 22 WCF is the ancestor of the 22 Hornet. It is around 1930 that a group of experimenters from Springfield Armory modified the 22 WCF to make the 22 Hornet : the .228" bullet is replaced by a .224" bullet and some thousands of inches are added or subtracted here and there. The working pressure is increased and the bullet exits 300 m/s (985 fps) faster than with the 22 WCF.

The 22 Hornet was marketed by Winchester at the beginning of the 30's and is since then chambered in all kind of firearms. On the following sketch, the dimensions are in millimeters.



The 22 Hornet has all the necessary qualities to make a good Field Pistol cartridge. : accuracy, flat trajectory, mild recoil, more than enough power and cheap to reload. Reloading the 22 Hornet is about the same price as shooting match quality 22 LR ammunitions.

The 22 Hornet is among the calibers easy to reload and giving good results without excessive research. It can be used with lead or jacketed bullets and can be reloaded to duplicate the performances of the 22 LR or have a cartridge able to shoot up to 200 meters (220 yards). The small capacity of the case allows its use in handguns, with only a muzzle velocity loss of 100 m/s (330 fps) in comparison with a rifle.

Among the handguns usable in Field Pistol, the T/C Contender is chambered in 22 Hornet since its introduction. It is now replaced by the G2 which accepts all the Contender barrels.

With a little research, it is possible to obtain one inch groups (and sometimes better) at 100 meters (110 yards) with reloaded ammunitions.

The bullets :

Many firearms chambered in 22 Hornet have a rifle twist of 1/14" which correctly stabilizes only the 40/45 grains blunt nose bullets especially designed for the 22 Hornet. To stabilize the 55 grains bullets, a 1/10" twist is necessary. The very first Contenders produced had a 1/14" twist, but soon T/C switched to the 1/10" twist.

Use bullets of 52/55 grains if your firearm has the adequate twist. Lighter bullets are stubby (length a little more than 2 calibers) and don't deliver the best accuracy, whatever the caliber anyway. With heavier bullets, the twist may be not enough. One of the best bullet is the Sierra 1410, 52 grains Matchking. But it is not cheap. You must try the maximum array of bullets to find the one which fits your firearm the best.

The primers :

It sounds that the 22 Hornet is not sensitive to this parameter. All kind of small diameter primers can be successfully used (small rifle or small pistol).

The powders :

I experimented with two French powders from Nobelsports (SP3 and Tubal 2000) and two Finish powders from Vihtavuori (N110 and N120).

A muzzle velocity of about 620 m/s (2034 fps) is enough.

Refer to the reloading tables of the powder manufacturers and work up the load carefully, observing pressure signs and with the assistance of a chronograph.

Some Contenders have a small headspace excess. With the quickest powders, this can lead to some ruptured cases. If so, switch to a slower powder.

The cases :

The main brands are Remington, Sako, RWS, Sellier & Bellot. Give them a try to find which one delivers the best results in your firearm.

JPB