

Bullet Testing

By Chuck Hawks

I wish *Guns and Shooting Online* had the facilities to do scientific bullet tests, but we don't. Neither do most other publications, although some fake it by shooting into "wet pack" or other invalid methods. To get statistically meaningful results on game would require shooting a great number of animals and they simply are not available. I guess I could buy a herd of domestic sheep or goats and test bullets on them, but I don't have the stomach for that. It isn't necessary, anyway.

I can tell you that all of the conventional lead core JSP, JHP and plastic tipped bullets we have used on deer and other CXP2 game work fine with shots to the heart/lung area. That includes Sierra GameKing and Pro Hunter; Speer Hot-Cor, Mag-Tip and Boat Tail; Hornady InterLock, SST and LeverEvolution (FTX); Nosler Ballistic Tip and Partition; Remington Core-Lokt and AccuTip; Winchester Power Point, Silvertip and Ballistic Silvertip; Federal Soft Point and Fusion; Swift Scirocco; etc., etc.

I don't use monometal (solid copper, gilding metal, brass, or very hard cast lead) bullets for CXP2 game, because they don't expand enough for my taste, especially at lower velocities, and often over-penetrate. Many others, however, have good success with them. The main thing is shot placement, just as it has been for the last 400 years.

Any rifle cartridge between .26 and .32 that can throw a 130-150 grain soft point bullet fast enough to carry 800+ ft. lbs. of energy at impact will kill CXP2 game with aplomb. It doesn't matter one bit to a buck whether you shoot him with a 150 grain bullet from a .30-30, .308 or .30-06. If you miss him, he runs off; if you wound him, he suffers; if you put the bullet through his heart or lungs he is dead in seconds.

That is why I find "field tests" of hunting rifles and cartridges pointless. We already know what is going to happen if we get a proper bullet into the right place--and also if we don't! A "new" cartridge, like the .270 WSM, kills no better and no worse than the "old" .270 Winchester or the .270 Wby. Mag. We can predict its effectiveness in advance. To a deer or a sheep, they are all the same.

If we shot a deer within the load's "green zone" (soft point bullet impact velocity between 2200-2600 fps) with any rifle/cartridge combination in that general category and it didn't go down, it would be our fault (bad bullet placement or we used the wrong type of bullet), not the rifle's or cartridge's. I can speak for the whole *Guns and Shooting Online* staff when I say that we have found no practical difference in killing power on CXP2 game between the .260, .270, 7x57, 7mm-

08, .30-30, .300 Savage, .308, .30-06, .32 Special, etc., etc. Hit right, a soft point bullet will trash the animal's heart or lungs and it will typically run a short distance (maybe 10-40 yards) and fall down dead. Some will run a little farther and some may drop on the spot, because individual animals are different and that is beyond anyone's control. In any case, they will quickly be dead, because animals cannot live for long without a functioning heart and lungs.

Recently, Chief Executive Technical Advisor Jim Fleck shot a 140 pound ram with a .338 Win. Mag. using a 225 grain Swift A-Frame bullet. (He was actually hunting big game at the time.) The result was the same, in terms of how far the ram ran (maybe 20 yards) and how quickly it died (a few seconds), as sheep we have shot with 7x57, .270 and .308 rifles. Of course, the .338 bullet went clear through and tore up the hillside beyond, but the sheep was not dead any quicker than if he had shot it with a .30-30.

I don't think anyone needs a medium bore magnum to kill CXP2 game, or that a medium bore (.33 caliber or larger) kills any faster or deader than a small bore (.32 caliber or smaller). However, if the hunter has confidence in the mediums, they work fine and confidence is important. Medium and big bore bullets may sometimes get through brush a little better than the smaller calibers, but all the experienced hunters I know make every effort not to shoot at animals through brush. Passing on bad shots is as important as making good ones!