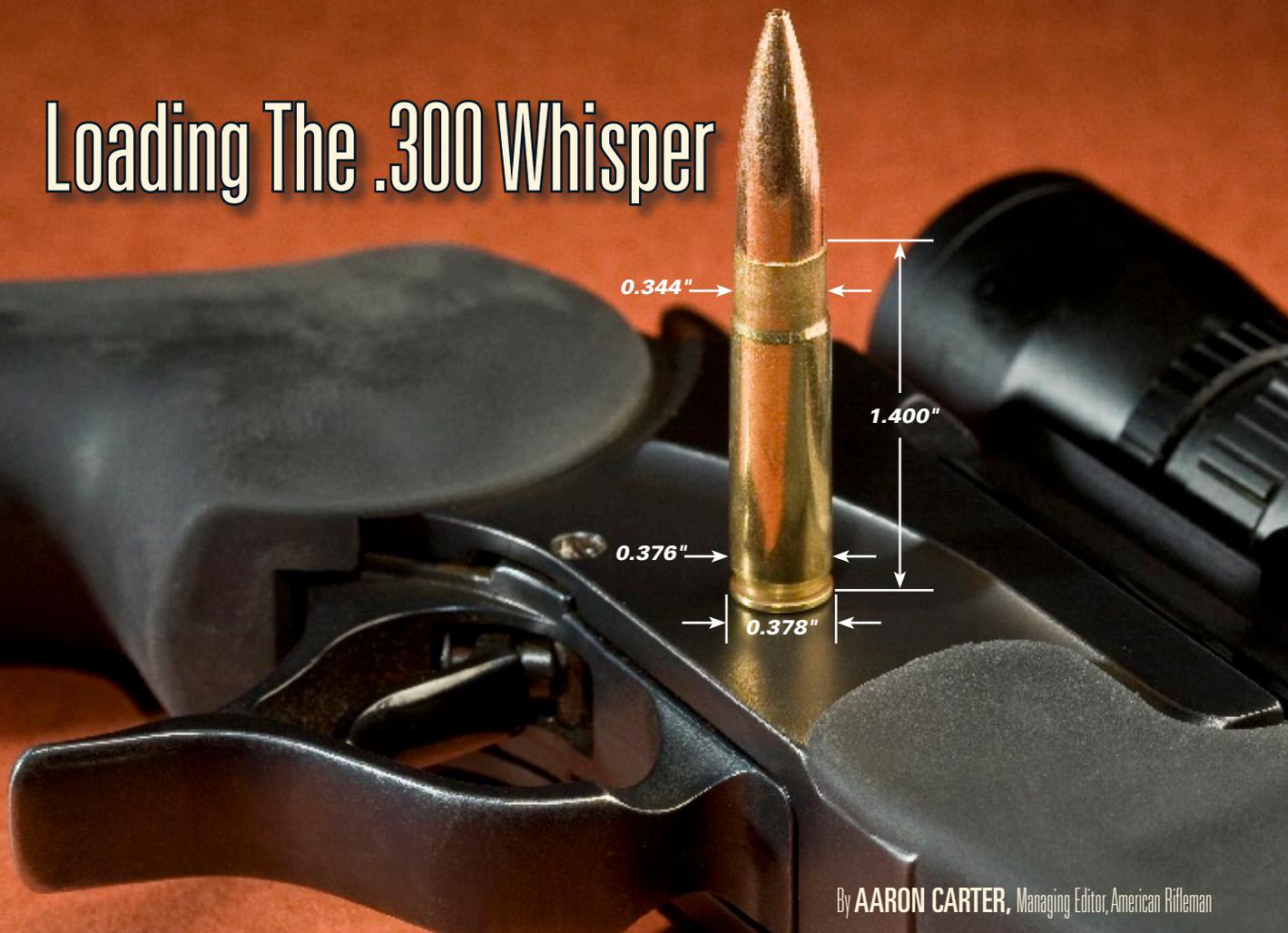


Loading The .300 Whisper



By AARON CARTER, Managing Editor, American Rifleman

Prolific wildcatter J.D. Jones' criteria for the .300 Whisper cartridge were demanding to say the least. He sought a multi-purpose cartridge capable of superb accuracy at 200 yds. with heavy-for-caliber and ballistically advanced bullets at subsonic velocities—below 1,128 f.p.s. at sea level and 70 degrees—that also provided acceptable accuracy with lighter projectiles at moderate speeds. It needed to be readily adaptable to the AR-15/M16 platforms, single-shot and bolt-action rifles, as well as the Thompson/Center Contender. And it had to be easily suppressed.

From Jones' concept was born the .300 Whisper, a cartridge that

has users as diverse as the bullets and tasks it will handle. Since its inception, the .300 Whisper has been effectively used for hunting, target and silhouette shooting, animal damage control and law enforcement, as well as more clandestine operations most of us will never hear about.

Knowing military and law enforcement professionals' affinity for .30-cal. bullets and that ballistically superior projectiles better maintain velocity for increased downrange energy, flatter trajectory and less wind deflection, Jones designed the new cartridge around Sierra's then-available 250-gr. MatchKing, the most advanced long-range bullet of the time.

As for the case, the .223 Rem. was quickly ruled out as a candidate because, when loaded with .30-cal. bullets, it resulted in a cartridge that was too long. The ideal case turned out to be the .221 Rem.

Long, match-style bullets such as the 240-gr. Sierra MatchKing occupy considerable space in the .300 Whisper case, so the reduced propellant charges required for subsonic velocities can be loaded without the addition of fillers.



Fireball, a cartridge introduced in conjunction with the Remington XP-100 handgun in 1963. An offspring of the .222 Rem., the .221 Rem. Fireball benefits from sharing the head size of its parent and .223 Rem. sibling; therefore, no altering or replacement of the bolt face would be necessary if the new cartridge were used in a firearm of these chamberings. Additionally, the .221 Rem. Fireball case allowed the long, .30-cal. bullets to be seated for the same cartridge overall length as the .223 Rem. or 5.56x45 mm NATO, thereby allowing it to work in these platforms. In 5.56x45 mm NATO AR-15 series rifles, only the upper receiver assembly requires replacement with one chambered in Jones' wildcat. Unaltered magazines allowed the new cartridge to function in a correctly barreled upper receiver.

The long projectiles occupied additional case capacity, which meant that the reduced propellant charges needed to attain subsonic velocities could be loaded without the addition of fillers. Further, the small powder charges resulted in minimal recoil, especially in gas-operated, self-loading rifles, and the suppressors used to quiet the cartridge could also be proportionately smaller.

In a single stroke of the press handle, both Hornady or RCBS expander dies expand the case neck from .22 to .30 caliber. Hornady's expander die expands the case neck from .22 to .25 cal., and then to .30 cal. Likewise, the tapered expander in RCBS' expander die takes it from .22 to .30 cal. in one quick step. Cases can also be formed from .222 Rem., .223 Rem. and 5.56x45 mm NATO brass, but doing so requires significantly more work and can result in thick necks that require turning.

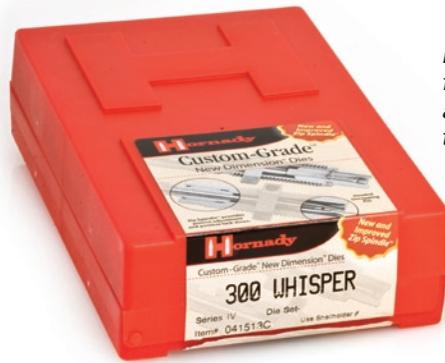
Be generous with case-sizing lubricant when forming cases, as doing so will keep them from distorting, binding, splitting or getting stuck in the expander die—all of which are concerns when forming .300 Whisper cases. After expanding the necks, cases are run through the full-length sizer die to achieve their final overall dimensions. No fire-forming is needed. Jones' company, SSK Industries, is the exclusive outlet for purchasing both Hornady and RCBS three-die sets. The only manufacturer of .221 Rem. Fireball cases is Remington.

As for propellants, the .300 Whisper requires relatively fast-burning powders, such as Accurate Arms No. 5, No. 7, No. 9 and 1680, Alliant 2400, VihtaVuori N110 and N120, Hodgdon H110, IMR 4227 and Winchester 296. I prefer H110, N110 and AA 1680, as these nicely cover the spectrum of .30-cal. bullets. Because of the small powder charges used in the .300 Whisper, loads need to be worked up in 0.1-gr. increments.

In this cartridge a small variation in propellant charge results in a significant jump in velocity and accuracy results, so take your time. Be especially attentive when working with subsonic loads, as an extra grain or two of propellant, along with the extreme spread of the load and the burn rate of the primer, could mean the difference between little or no discernible noise and a sonic crack. I recommend weighing charges on a balance-beam scale or electronic scale to ensure consistency. For ignition, any small rifle primer will work; however, J.D. Jones prefers Remington's No. 7½ primer because of its thicker cup and consistency.

At higher velocities, and when used within its limitations, the .300 Whisper is an excellent small- to

Generally, heavy, match-style bullets—such as the 240-, 200- and 180-gr. Sierra MatchKings and 168-gr. Berger MBTHP VLD shown (l. to r.) in the left row—are best reserved for paper targets. Better options for hunting include (l. to r.) the Barnes 150-gr. TSX and 130-gr. Tipped TSX, Nosler's 125-gr. Ballistic Tip and the Speer 130-gr. Hot-Cor shown in the right row.



Hornady and RCBS make dies for the .300 Whisper cartridge, although they are only available through SSK Industries.



medium-size game cartridge; however, bullet selection is vital to success in the field. Because most big-game hunting bullets are designed to withstand impacts surpassing the 3,000 f.p.s. mark, many of them will not expand reliably at .300 Whisper velocities. When choosing a bullet, look for those weighing 150 grs. or less, as well as projectiles with polymer tips, gaping cavities or large meplats as these are more likely to expand. As a general rule, if the bullet performs properly for the .30-30 Win., then it should upset in the .300 Whisper.

Outside of those designed to work at .30-30 Win. velocities, there is a relatively small selection of big-game bullets from which to choose for the .300 Whisper. Until recently, the go-to hunting bullet was the 125-gr. Nosler Ballistic Tip. A new projectile with a promising outlook for the .300 Whisper is the Barnes Tipped Triple-Shock X-Bullet (TTSX). In July, I killed a feral hog with a prototype 130-gr. TTSX moving at less than 2,000 f.p.s., and the exit wound, supported by observations in a Bullet Test Tube, confirmed that the projectile fully expanded before leaving the animal. A big-game bullet expanding at that velocity is impressive.

As crazy as it sounds, varmint bullets work surprisingly well for

deer-size game in the .300 Whisper, given sufficient velocity is provided to force upset. Essentially, at lower velocities these bullets take on an alter ego, performing more like controlled-expansion projectiles. But before heading to the field, it is a good idea to test your bullet of choice to ensure it will expand at a given velocity.

For those who shoot paper or metallic targets, there is an amazing array of very accurate .30-cal. bullets available for the task. Basically, everything weighing more than 150 grs.—with the exception of the 170-gr., flat-point .30-30 Win. bullets—should only be used for targets, as none in this weight class will expand at .300 Whisper velocities. The long, heavy-for-caliber match bullets also deliver more energy on-target at longer distances than most traditional handgun rounds, and they do so more accurately. Although these types of bullets are inherently accurate and often produce devastating tissue wounds because of their yawing effect, the unpredictability of such results should curtail their use for hunting. That is, unless using a suppressed shot is the only option.

The *Hornady Handbook of Cartridge Reloading, Sixth Edition*, lists the .300 Whisper's maximum



Bullets For The .300 Whisper



cartridge overall length (COL) at 2.260", the same as the .223 Rem., although none of its listed loads exceed 2.240". The *Sierra 50th Anniversary Handgun Reloading Manual* leaves the maximum COL measurement optional, although bullets weighing 168 grs. and heavier are seated to give a 2.260" COL. There are no SAAMI pressure specifications for the .300 Whisper.

For those who do not handload, there is only one factory option available. Cor-Bon has a 150-gr. pointed-soft-point hunting load at 1,900 f.p.s., which produces 1,203 ft.-lbs. of energy.

Thompson/Center and SSK Industries manufacture rifle and

handgun barrels for the Encore and Contender. The former uses 1:10"-twist rifling that will not properly stabilize 240-gr. Match-King bullets, whether or not bullets in the 220-gr. weight class will stabilize is contingent on the bullet's length, profile and velocity. SSK Industries' match-grade Shilen barrels have 1:8"-twist rifling as standard, though 1:6" and 1:7" are options. As for AR-15s, SSK offers complete packages (gun included), custom-built upper assemblies and rebarreling of existing uppers in .300 Whisper. As for other rifle types, if it is chambered in .223 Rem. it can likely be rebarreled, not rechambered, to .300 Whisper. According to Jones,

the Ruger Mini-14 is an exception. Any of these rifles can be threaded to accept a suppressor, which SSK Industries also builds.

When considering the purchase of .300 Whisper products, know that outside of SSK Industries, only Thompson/Center Arms is licensed to produce .300 Whisper Contender and Encore barrels, and RCBS and Hornady make the only licensed dies for the cartridge. Some companies have worked around this restriction by slightly changing the cartridge's name. This is the least of their worries though, as sometimes dimensions vary slightly, which could create a dangerous situation. Let the buyer beware. 

WARNING: Technical data and information contained herein are intended to provide information based upon the limited experience of individuals under specific conditions and circumstances. They do not detail the comprehensive training, procedures, techniques and safety precautions that are absolutely necessary to properly carry on similar activity. READ THE NOTICE AND DISCLAIMER ON THE CONTENTS PAGE OF THIS MAGAZINE. ALWAYS CONSULT COMPREHENSIVE REFERENCE MANUALS AND BULLETINS OF PROPER TRAINING REQUIREMENTS, PROCEDURES, TECHNIQUES AND SAFETY PRECAUTIONS BEFORE ATTEMPTING ANY SIMILAR ACTIVITIES.

SELECTED .300 WHISPER LOADS

BULLET BRAND, NAME & TYPE	BULLET WEIGHT (GRS.)	C.O.L. (INCHES)	POWDER CHARGE (GRS.)	POWDER TYPE	ACCURACY (INCHES)	VELOCITY 14³/₄" (F.P.S.)	VELOCITY 24" (F.P.S.)
NOSLER BALLISTIC TIP	125	2.100	15.7	HODGDON H110	0.70	1999	2,102
NOSLER BALLISTIC TIP	125	2.100	17.5	HODGDON H110	0.80	2159	2252
SPEER TNT	125	2.100	15.5	HODGDON H110	0.64	1938	1999
SPEER TNT	125	2.100	16.5	HODGDON H110	0.80	2030	2145
BARNES TTSX	130	2.250	16.5	HODGDON H110	0.69	2012	2108
BARNES TSX FN	150	2.015	14.0	HODGDON H110	0.71	1648	1738
SIERRA PRO-HUNTER RN	150	2.010	14.9	HODGDON H110	0.88	1797	1853
BERGER MBTHP VLD	168	2.260	13.7	HODGDON H110	0.60	1635	1618
SIERRA MATCHKING BTHP	180	2.260	17.0	ACCURATE ARMS 1680	0.60	1659	1732
HORNADY INTERLOCK BTSP	190	2.240	16.5	ACCURATE ARMS 1680	0.61	1617	1695
SIERRA MATCHKING BTHP	200	2.260	15.4	ACCURATE ARMS 1680	0.55	1479	1540
SIERRA MATCHKING BTHP	220	2.260	9.8	VIHTAVUORI N110	0.68	1086	*
SIERRA MATCHKING BTHP	240	2.260	9.5	VIHTAVUORI N110	0.60	1040	*

MUZZLE VELOCITY WAS MEASURED IN FEET PER SECOND BY AN OEHLER MODEL 43 CHRONOGRAPH AND IS REPRESENTATIVE OF FIVE CONSECUTIVE SHOTS FROM A 14³/₄", 1:8"-TWIST SSK INDUSTRIES ENCORE BARREL AND A 24", 1:10"-TWIST THOMPSON/CENTER ENCORE BARREL. ACCURACY WAS MEASURED IN INCHES FOR FIVE, FIVE-SHOT GROUPS AT 100 YDS. CARTRIDGE OVERALL LENGTH WAS MEASURED IN INCHES. POWDER CHARGE WAS MEASURED IN GRAINS. ALL LOADS USED WINCHESTER SMALL RIFLE (WSR) PRIMERS. * DENOTES INSUFFICIENT TWIST TO PROPERLY STABILIZE BULLET; THEREFORE, NO VELOCITY MEASUREMENT WAS TAKEN. ABBREVIATIONS: BTHP (BOATTAIL HOLLOW-POINT), BTSP (BOATTAIL SPIRE-POINT), MBTHP VLD (MATCH BOATTAIL HOLLOW POINT VERY LOW DRAG), RN (ROUND-NOSE), TSX FN (TRIPLE-SHOCK X-BULLET FLAT NOSE), TTSX (TIPPED TRIPLE-SHOCK X-BULLET).