



Description, Details and Quotes for Federal Premium's New HammerDown Ammo

The following is a detailed explanation on the features and benefits, plus the story behind Federal's all-new HammerDown ammunition optimized for lever-action rifles.

The marketing copy in Federal's 2020 catalog paints the perfect picture of the new Federal Premium HammerDown Ammunition:

Make your lever-gun run like never before with the industry's only ammunition truly designed for optimal cycling and overall performance from the time-tested rifle platform. Velocities of all-new Federal Premium HammerDown loads are customized to produce superior ballistics and terminal performance through lever-action barrel lengths. The construction of the molecularly bonded soft-point or hollow-point bullets have also been adjusted for the best accuracy and expansion at those velocities. The geometry of each round's case, bullet and cartridge ensures flawless cycling through tubular magazine and typical lever-action feeding systems.

Although that description is accurate and complete, this article dives deep into the weeds of this new line of ammunition to fully explain its features and benefits. It also provides insight on the ammunition's backstory and purpose through quotes from the experts at Federal and Henry who designed, developed, built and delivered it.



Five Main Points

There are five things that set HammerDown apart from other ammunition. Here's what hunters and shooters need to know:

First, HammerDown was designed in collaboration with Henry Repeating Arms. When you set out to build the best lever-action rifle ammunition, you go to the industry's leading lever-gun manufacturer. Henry Repeating Arms is known for top-performing lever-action rifles with excellent, made-in-America craftsmanship. Outstanding examples of rifles popular with hunters include their Big Boy All-Weather and Big Boy Steel models.

Federal is proud to have worked with Henry Repeating Arms when developing HammerDown. Their insight into the classic firearm platform helped ensure the utmost reliability and accuracy from each and every load. This ammunition is made in America, something both companies are extremely proud of and dedicated to.

For the initial launch of the HammerDown product line, Federal selected the most popular lever-action rifle calibers. This includes 327 Federal Magnum, 357 Magnum, 44 Rem. Magnum, 45 Colt, 30-

30 Win., and 45-70 Government. The 35 Rem. cartridge will come soon after the initial product launch. Other cartridges could be added in the future to grow the product line.

Second, HammerDown is specifically engineered for any and all lever guns. It is designed to function flawlessly and easily in side-gate loading and tubular magazines. To do this, Federal chamfered the case of all HammerDown cartridges. These improved cases feature specialized geometry on the front face of the case's rim. This difference improves cycling in all lever-action feeding systems.

Third, all options in the HammerDown product line feature molecularly bonded bullets. This process of bonding copper plating to a lead core is similar to how Federal's FUSION and Speer's Gold Dot bullets are manufactured. This time-tested bonding technique delivers best-in-class expansion and weight retention on impact. Since many of the products in the HammerDown lineup are traditionally handgun cartridges, Federal loaded those cartridges with heavy-for-caliber bullets and set them to increased velocities to deliver better depth of penetration when shot out of longer rifle barrels.

Fourth, all other components are of the highest grades of quality in the industry. The precision-built cases feature nickel-plated brass that defeats corrosion and aids in sleek, smooth extraction in even the most extreme conditions. The clean-burning, consistent powders are specially formulated to meet the most stringent specifications. Gold Medal primers are manufactured to exacting tolerances to deliver precise and reliable ignition.

Additionally, HammerDown is a Federal Premium branded product. This means all components and loading steps are subjected to more frequent inspections, such as dimensional tolerances and charge weights, than standard ammunition when loaded at the factory. This is to provide the highest assurance that it will deliver the best, most consistent performance for every shot.

Finally, all HammerDown is packaged in traditional long, flat rifle ammunition boxes in 20-count quantities. Since cartridges such as 327 Federal Magnum, 357 Magnum, and 44 Rem. Magnum—traditionally known to be handgun cartridges—are now optimized for a use out of a rifle, Federal put them in rifle packaging. This move helps customers make that distinction.

All these modifications define HammerDown as purpose-built ammunition targeted to hunters who use lever-action rifles. That's also great news for target shooters too, as this ammunition delivers improved functioning and/or better accuracy at longer ranges when shot out of any lever-action rifle.

As a side note, several of the product line's offerings are straight-wall cartridges. Hunters and shooters who are looking for better options when hunting in states where straight-wall cartridges are legal will benefit from this new high-performance ammunition as well.

HammerDown is attractively priced. Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price (MSRP) is \$19.99 for all cartridge offerings, except 45-70 Government which is \$38.99.

Boosting the Bullets

All bullets for HammerDown are either Bonded Soft Points (357 Magnum, 44 Rem. Magnum, 30-30 Win. and 45-70 Government) or Bonded Hollow Points (327 Federal Magnum and 45 Colt). These bullet types were selected intentionally for each specific cartridge to ensure optimal terminal performance. Weight retention of these bonded bullets is impressive. Testing conducted by Federal engineers at the factory in Anoka, MN, shows the 30-30 Win. load having 100-percent retained bullet weight after being shot through 10-percent ballistic-ordinance gel at 100 yards.

Bullet weights for the 30-30 Win. and 45-70 Government loads were based off our already established hunting loads designed for rifles. However, Federal started from scratch with the handgun calibers. These needed to be drastically adjusted to hold up to the higher velocities that are possible when shot through rifle barrels versus shorter handgun barrels. For that, Federal used heavy-for-caliber bullets. Increased bullet weight better handles higher velocities produced from longer rifle barrels and helps provide better depth of penetration upon impact. Examples of these beefier bullets include: the 357 Magnum bullet being 170 grains compared to 158 grains, 44 Rem. Mag being 270 grains compared to

240 grains and the 45 Colt being 250 grain compared to 225 grains. These comparisons are made using Federal's existing hunting handgun loads.

HammerDown is loaded to velocities that provide superior ballistics through lever-action rifles. For the cartridges that are traditionally loaded for a handgun, the dramatic increase in velocity and pressure still falls under proper velocity and pressure specifications established by the Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute (SAAMI) as industry standards.

Increased velocities and performance in handgun cartridges is significant. HammerDown's 357 Magnum is going 1,610 feet-per-second (fps) compared to 1,180 fps, 44 Rem. Magnum is going 1,715 fps compared to 1,250 fps, and 45 Colt is going 1,400 fps compared to 800 fps. These comparisons are made using Federal's existing hunting handgun loads.

Bottom line, this ammunition shoots and feels like the powerful rifle loads they are, yet are comfortable and smooth to shoot.

Interviews with the Experts

For the past few years, Federal and Henry and had many meetings and discussions about HammerDown, here are excerpts taken from experts at both companies to provide insight on this exciting new line of purpose-built ammunition.

What is the backstory on this ammunition?

Federal wanted to make certain that we were filling the needs of our customers. We had a gap in our ammunition assortment for lever-action firearms and received feedback from our customers that they needed "better performing" ammunition for their lever-action firearms. As we completely designed and develop this product line, we wanted to collaborate with a firearms manufacturer that was known for lever-action firearms. Henry Repeating Firearms was a natural fit and has been a great resource for this project. In total, the end result of HammerDown is about 2 years in the making. - *Eric Miller, Federal Ammunition Centerfire Rifle Product Line Manager*

As a firearms manufacturer we field many questions about ammunition such as what ammunition we recommend for our rifles, what ammunition we test-fire with, or more in-depth questions like which ammunition we recommend for maximum velocity at 200 yards from a carbine-length barrel. Some customers have very in-depth knowledge about ammunition and ballistics, while others just want to know what is the "best" without needing to know the "why". We thought to ourselves, "Wouldn't it be great if we partnered with an ammunition manufacturer and created something from scratch that would answer all of these questions in one fell swoop?" Given Federal's superb track record for creating great products and their commitment to 'Made in America', the partnership was a natural fit. And thus, HammerDown was born. - *Dan Clayton-Luce, Henry Repeating Arms Communications Director*

How did the development process occur between Federal and Henry on this new line of ammo?

The initial conversation came from a discussion about other business initiatives. Both companies realized there was a synergy when working together and the idea for a line-up of ammunition specifically designed and optimized for lever-action firearms was born. The invention and introduction of HammerDown also accomplishes our parts of our company mission that are: building better ammunition in America and helping to conserve our hunting heritage. - *Eric Miller, Federal Ammunition Centerfire Rifle Product Line Manager*

Henry Repeating Arms initially reached out to Federal Premium about a different project. As those discussions progressed, it became increasingly clear that both Henry and Federal wanted to do something bigger. The initial idea then morphed into a full-on collaboration between both companies to create HammerDown in a range of calibers. The fact that the Federal Premium headquarters in Anoka, Minnesota and the Henry facility in Rice Lake, Wisconsin are just a couple of hours away from each other, collaboration was seamless. The development process started with a basic wish list and product engineers from both sides came together to check them off one-by-one. - *Thomas Kotz, Henry Repeating Arms Product Manager*

Why is there a specific need for specialized ammunition designed for lever actions?

Federal has always been excellent at creating the best performing ammunition in the market. To fill a gap we identified within the marketplace, we knew we needed a line of ammunition that performed well in lever-action firearms. Most importantly, this ammunition needed to provide the terminal performance to be an effective and ethical hunting round for medium game. However, a lot of the cartridges used in lever-action firearms are traditionally handgun cartridges. Because of this, we needed to develop a complete line of optimized ammunition for use in lever-action rifles while still functioning in handguns. During development, we looked most specifically at terminal performance across all cartridges when shot in a lever-action firearm. With HammerDown, we believe we have accomplished that goal, among other improvements. - *Eric Miller, Federal Ammunition Centerfire Rifle Product Line Manager*

Henry is best known for manufacturing a line of classic, well-crafted firearms—especially commemorative and collectible models—that every enthusiast can afford. Even as early as ten years ago we didn't make any rifles specifically for hunting purposes. Today, that has changed in a big way. We are definitely seeing more people choosing to hunt with a lever-action rifle as a result. There are simply more options now for someone looking to hunt with a Henry. We provide the absolute best rifle we can, and Federal stepped up to the plate to provide their expertise and create the best ammunition for our platform. But, a 357 Magnum revolver is a very different firearm than a lever-action rifle chambered in 357 Magnum with a 20-inch barrel. The action is inherently different, the barrel length is vastly different, and the typical uses are different as well. Why use ammunition that was designed with the revolver in mind when there is now an option that was created specifically to maximize performance out of the rifle? - *Dan Clayton-Luce, Henry Repeating Arms Communications Director*

What are the main issues that Federal & Henry customers have with standard factory ammunition in their lever-action rifles?

One of the biggest issues is reliable cycling and loading of the cartridges. This issue was fixed with the modified case geometry. Another issue was bullets in traditional handgun cartridges being too light and too slow for the rifle platform. We successfully increased bullet weights and velocities to fix that problem as well. - *Jake Burns, Federal Ammunition Centerfire Rifle Product Engineer*

Two of the biggest issues that our customers face are feeding/ejecting problems and low velocity loads that require lighter bullets. Some ammunition out there deliver reliability in feeding and ejecting at the sacrifice of speed for penetration, and vice versa. With HammerDown, those problems are fixed. The geometry of HammerDown lends itself to flawless cycling in our rifles. The overall performance of the molecularly-bonded bullets set to fast velocities was developed in such a way that there are no compromises being made. - *Dan Clayton-Luce, Henry Repeating Arms Communications Director*

What are the three most significant upgrades you feel are the most important benefits or advantages of the new HammerDown ammunition?

First, shooters get excellent terminal performance across the entire product line up. We utilized “newer” bullets in these “older” cartridges that increased the terminal performance while still functioning across all platforms. Since this ammunition is intended for hunters, it just made sense to load molecularly-bonded hunting bullets. Second, feeding performance in all rifles: tube feed as well as side gate firearms. Federal used modified case geometry to eliminate any feeding issues. Finally, packaging updates to the handgun cartridges letting the consumer know that this caliber was optimized and will work in their lever-action rifle. - *Jake Burns, Federal Ammunition Centerfire Rifle Product Engineer*

The three most significant upgrades of HammerDown are the heavily constructed bullets, enhanced downrange performance, and the unparalleled reliability in lever-action platforms. We wanted to emphasize penetration via the heavy, bonded bullets, which is a desirable when hunting thick woods using a slim, compact lever gun. Other brands sell speed but typically need to sacrifice bullet weight and penetration to achieve it. - *Thomas Kotz, Henry Repeating Arms Product Manager*

What customers did you have in mind when you designed and developed this product?

HammerDown was developed for the individual hunting medium to big game with their lever-action rifle. Whether they are using a lever-action firearm that has been handed down through generations or have purchased a brand-new firearm, the nostalgia and enjoyment of hunting with a lever-action rifle is a tribute to our hunting heritage. Now, shooters can find the best ammunition to pair with any of their favorite lever-action firearms, and we are proud of that. - *Eric Miller, Federal Ammunition Centerfire Rifle Product Line Manager*

HammerDown is the perfect solution for a lever-action hunter that wants a turn-key, out-of-the-box solution that’s optimized specifically for their rifle. For those hunting at 200 yards and less, in thick brush or wooded areas, HammerDown and a lever-action rifle provides a combination that’s tough to beat. - *Dan Clayton-Luce, Henry Repeating Arms Communications Director*

What are the most exciting things that come to mind when thinking about this new product line?

Federal is most excited about being able to provide a very specific answer to the question of “what ammunition should I use in my lever-action firearm.” We are honored that Henry has joined with us and proud that we can recommend their firearms and they can recommend our ammunition. We know this ammunition will be a hit with all lever-gun enthusiasts and hunters who are looking for the best straight-wall cartridges available. - *Eric Miller, Federal Ammunition Centerfire Rifle Product Line Manager*

With the release of HammerDown, customers finally have a cartridge that’s built from the ground up with their lever action in mind. Having companies like Henry Repeating Arms and Federal Premium backing the new line should instill confidence that there’s a quality product inside the box. For us, it’s an incredibly exciting product line because we’ve never put our “stamp of approval” on any one brand or type of ammunition up until now. That’s a big step considering how many requests for ammo recommendations we get every day. The answer is now very clear, and we’re

really proud of what we came up with together with Federal Premium. - *Dan Clayton-Luce, Henry Repeating Arms Communications Director*

Which cartridge do you think you'll sell the most, and which one may surprise readers?

The 30-30 Win. is my pick for top seller. There are a lot of old and new 30-30's out there and this will benefit all of those that use this for hunting. But I think the 327 Federal Magnum will be the round that surprises people. Introduced by Federal in 1984, the .327 Federal Magnum gained popularity because it reached the velocity and performance levels of the .357 Magnum in a smaller cartridge. At launch, several revolvers were chambered in it. In early 2017, Henry Repeating Arms announced production of four new lever-action long guns. They have sold a lot of these rifles and carbines, so I think the .327 Federal Magnum will be popular too. - *Eric Miller, Federal Ammunition Centerfire Rifle Product Line Manager*

I think the 357 Magnum will likely be the top seller due to the widespread popularity and powerful nature of that cartridge in general. But, I agree with Eric Miller. I also think the 327 Federal Magnum will probably be the one that surprisingly sells quite a bit. There really isn't a whole lot on the market as far as 327 Federal Magnum is concerned, especially when it comes to hunting ammunition, but there's no doubt that it has its fans. Those fans of 327 Federal Magnum should be particularly excited by the release of this line. - *Dan Clayton-Luce, Henry Repeating Arms Communications Director*

What else do you want readers to know about this new product line?

Whether you're putting your lever-gun to work on bucks, bulls or boars, HammerDown's molecularly-bonded bullets and cartridge velocities are optimized for terminal performance through lever-action barrel lengths. Both Federal Ammunition and Henry Repeating Arms feel that this product is a great step forward in a line-up specifically developed for the hunter using this type of firearm. - *Eric Miller, Federal Ammunition Centerfire Rifle Product Line Manager*

The most important thing to know about the new HammerDown line of ammunition is that there are two companies behind the product, both of which are known for the quality of the product they put out. It's not just an existing product put into a new box with a new name either. This is the result of two years of development and testing to make sure that it lives up to the name. We can't wait for people to get out there and start using this ammunition in the field. Hunting seasons are exciting times for us because of all the fan mail we get from people showing off their harvests that they took with a Henry. I'm sure we'll be hearing a whole lot of success stories with the Henry/HammerDown combo. It's a one-two punch. - *Dan Clayton-Luce, Henry Repeating Arms Communications Director*

Every product that bears the Federal Premium name starts with a vision to redefine what's possible. Federal's many exclusive technologies turn that goal into reality with the support of the industry's best components, most skilled craftsmen, and the tightest quality standards. Learn more about HammerDown ammunition at www.federalpremium.com.

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