

# RELOAD GAUGES & A LEVER WRAP

Shoot smarter and faster with these range-ready essentials.

BY TODD G. LOFGREN

If you reload for your Cowboy Action shotgun, be it a Winchester '87, '97 or some breed of side-by-side, you've probably experienced an occasional jam during practice or competition that you could trace back to a poorly assembled round. I've loaded literally thousands of shotshells over the years on one of several MEC presses I own and often have to discard a reload, especially if it's put together on one of my hydraulic machines. A malformed shell produced by one of these automatic marvels is usually easy to spot, most often being crushed beyond recognition, but occasionally one slips through that has a wrinkle in its plastic, a poorly formed crimp or a minute tear in its brass that, if left undetected, will jam the mechanism of even the most forgiving of guns at the worst possible time.

## Boggus Deal Gauge

A quick way to verify the veracity of the shotshells you'll be taking to your next match is to use a shotshell checker or gauge. The one featured here was designed by SASS Member "Boggus Deal" and manufactured by AP Custom. It's available online from UniqueTek. Offered in both 12 and 20 gauges, the Boggus Deal shotshell gauge is CNC-machined from 6061-T6 aluminum and is then anodized red (for 12 gauge) or blue (for 20 gauge) for durability and easy recognition. It is designed to test both 2¾- and 3-inch shells, both low and high brass, and gauges the entire length of the shell, ensuring not only that the brass is sized and true, but that the plastic portion of the hull is also straight and uniform. The gauges' internal dimensions are sized to minimum SAAMI chamber specs, and their overall lengths measures 2.63 inches.



The "Boggus Deal" shotshell gauge from UniqueTek caught one of the author's slightly out-of-spec reloads. If it doesn't bottom out in the gauge, there's something amiss.

To use, simply drop each one of your reloaded shotshells into the gauge and, if they easily bottom out, they're good to go. If not, save them for practice! (uniquetek.com; 855-507-0866)

## Lyman Ammo Checker

While on the subject of gauges or checkers for your ammo, Lyman has recently introduced three new cartridge checkers covering our most commonly encountered handgun and rifle calibers. The Lyman Handgun Ammo Checker, featured here, covers most of the rounds currently used in Cowboy Action competition, as well as a few other frequently reloaded cartridges. Made from a solid block of aircraft-grade 6061-T6 aluminum and precisely machined to SAAMI minimum chamber dimensions, the orange anodized handgun gauge will

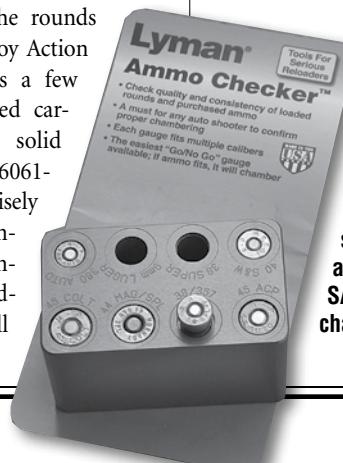
accommodate .380 ACP, 9mm Luger, .38 Super, .38/.357, .40 S&W, .44 Mag/Special and .45 Colt rounds. To use, simply insert a cartridge into the proper, clearly marked hole, and if it drops in easily and fits flush with the top of the gauge, it is of proper size and will reliably chamber and function in your firearm. It's billed as the "easiest 'go/no-go' gauge available." (lymanproducts.com; 800-225-9626)

## Palo Verde Lever Wrap

I've reviewed several different makers' lever wraps over the years, and they've always had a little something unique to offer in how they looked, felt and attached. They were all made well and, when installed, improved not only the looks of the lever gun, but also provided distinction to each arm, all while improving the comfort by which they operated.

The wrap I tested most recently is different from the rest and comes from Palo Verde Gunworks via UniqueTek. While all of the previous wraps I've reviewed were made from a single piece of leather, the Palo Verde offering is fabricated from four pieces of leather so as to make it wide and flat, providing more cushioning to the back of one's fingers when levering. Its design is such that, when properly installed, it won't slide, twist or turn, providing positive, comfortable and repeatable contact with your fingers.

Lyman's Ammo Checker is a handy tool for making sure all of your handgun ammunition is within proper SAAMI specifications to chamber correctly.



It accomplishes this through the use of a leather-ribbed back plate that is glued to the underside of the wrap and overlaps both sides of the lever, holding it securely when properly laced in place. It's made from premium vegetable-tanned leather pre-punched for attaching to your favorite lever gun using the included long-wearing, nylon-cored, dark-colored lace. A DVD detailing the step-by-step installation instructions is included. Since one size doesn't fit all in this case, the Palo Verde Leather Wrap comes in five different sizes to accommodate most lever guns, including Winchesters, Marlins and Henrys.

I requested a sample kit for my circa-1919 Winchester 1894 rifle that I occasionally use for silhouette shooting



Following the detailed instructions provided in the included DVD, the Palo Verde Lever Wrap was easy to install.

as this 96-year-old gun's mechanism has become somewhat recalcitrant with age and tends to cause me considerable discomfort over the course of a 40- or 80-round silhouette match or a prolonged practice session. After reviewing the included DVD, I set about attaching the wrap to my trusty old '94. As suggested in the video, I took my time, ensuring that all my lacing was neat and uniform, and some 30 minutes later my ancient .30-30 Winchester sported a new look and feel.

A well-thought-out and innovative design in leather wraps, Palo Verde's version not only adds comfort and stability to your shootin' iron, but it looks damn good while doing it. (uniquetek.com; 855-507-0866)