

Using The .50 AE

THE .50 AE IS AN EXCEPTIONAL caliber for deer-sized game, and with proper bullets is fully capable of taking game of elk and moose proportions, if bullets suitable to that task appear. The limited selection of .50 AE bullets currently on the market are not intended for the deep penetration needed for shooting the biggest game. Instead, the bullets available are designed for relatively quick expansion and energy transfer which, while good on deer-sized game, is not conducive to deep penetration. The .50 AE has been used on dangerous game as large as Kodiak bears, but like most handguns, they are a little outclassed in that situation.

There may be some target applications for the .50 AE, such as informal silhouette shooting. However, the AutoMag V does not exhibit the characteristics that serious silhouette shooters are looking for. The AutoMag V's recoil is stiff for those marathon 80-round matches, and with only a 6-inch barrel and short sight radius, the gun would not make good use of the barrel-length regulations. Also, the .50 AE would be used in the production class, and as a straight-case, large-diameter bullet design. It is opposite of the sleek, high-velocity calibers now in vogue. The semi-auto design is also not well suited to some of the shooting positions used in freestyle classes. There are just a lot of better choices for the serious silhouette shooter.

In our view, this round would deliver plenty of performance for the handgun-toting deer hunter, and it could be used appropriately in that context as well as a step up to slightly larger game. But guns chambered for the .50 AE are really novelties. This gun is a lot of fun when you watch a target's reaction to a hit from the massive bullets. Also, there is a certain satisfaction controlling this much power in a handgun, and for those comfortable enough to admit they like to shoot the biggest and nastiest handgun around, the .50 AE is a lot of fun.

Currently, .50 AE factory loads are available from Speer with a 325-grain HP bullet and from Samson with 300-grain FP or HP bullets. Magnum Research offers ammo loaded by Speer/CCI in 300-grain HP and 350-grain SP. Reloaders have only the Speer bullet readily available to them. Note that the MRI 350-grain ammo is new on the market and has yet to be tested extensively in the field. It may well eliminate some of the big-game problems with this caliber.