

Runners Up

Though we think certain products are the best for each region's predominant hunting conditions, other cartridge/gun combos are also worth a look:

Heavy Brush

Another good cartridge choice for this kind of hunting is the .454 Casull using 300-grain Hornady XTP bullets. You can handload or buy .454 Casull factory stuff from Black Hills Ammunition. In a 7½-inch barrel on a Freedom Arms revolver, the 300-grain XTP Black Hills Ammo turns in 1,389 fps and 1,287 foot-pounds of



Above: The .454 Casull revolver is a good cartridge for hunting in heavy brush.

energy. Handloads with 31 grains of H-110 beat that velocity figure by about 100 fps. Freedom Arms' loads using the company's flat-point bullet will hit 1,600 fps. Caution: Don't try to drive the XTP or similar bullets as fast as the very-hard-jacketed Freedom bullets. Softer bullets swell in the forcing cone and raise pressures too high. However, if the alloy is hard enough, cast bullets can be driven to high velocities without forcing cone upset in the



Above: The .45-70 Government is another good Contender cartridge, especially with a hard-cast bullet from the RCBS 45-458-FN mold. Fifty grains of IMR 3031 or 48 grains of H-332 powder with a CCI LR primer will push the projectile to about 1,400 fps.

Casull. Designs such as the RCBS 45-300-SWC work very well, providing the awesome penetration. If casting isn't for you, there are several excellent pre-cast bullets on the market for the .454 Casull. One that has received excellent reports is the BRP, which is offered in a variety of weights and designs.

Single shots will also work in the thick stuff, since you're likely to get only one shot on any deer. The Thompson Center Contender is the best-known single-shot action, and the .45-70 Government barrel is among T/C's best products for dense-cover deer hunting. In .45-70 factory loads, we recommend Federal's 300-grain hollow point, which travels at 1,662 fps from the 16-inch T/C barrel. Handloads can push a 300-grain bullet over 1,800 fps. Perhaps the top jacketed bullet for handloading the .45-70 is the Speer 400-grain FP.

Another good performer is a hard-cast bullet from the RCBS 45-458-FN mold. Try 50 grains of IMR 3031 or 48 grains of H-332 powder with a CCI LR primer for about 1,400 fps. Hang on, though, because the resulting recoil can cross your eyes.

Caution: Thompson Center recommends that you not exceed the 28,000 c.u.p. standard when reloading for its handguns. The loads cited above do exceed those recommended in Speer No. 12 manual, so use them at your own risk.

Midrange Shots

The .309 JDJ offered in the SSK's Contender barrels combines good terminal performance with reasonable recoil. However, another SSK offering steps up the terminal ballistics. The .375 JDJ shoots 270-grain Speer



Above: Deer handgun cartridges include (back row, left to right) the 7X30 Waters, 7mm-08 Rem., .30-30 Win., .308 Win., .30-06 Springfield, .300 Win. Mag., .357 Herrett, .35 Rem., .358 Win., and .45-70. On the front row, left to right, are the .357 Mag. (which we don't recommend), the .44 Mag., .454 Casull, and .50 AE rounds.

SPBT bullets at 1,967 fps, and zeroed at 150 yards, the round hits 2.21 inches high at 100 yards and 5.08 inches low at 200 yards. It doesn't drop below the 1,000 foot-pounds energy mark until 450 yards. Accuracy is minute-of-angle. The downside: Recoil can be a stiff. Not everybody can shoot this gun well.

Long-range Shots

You can get guns such as the Competitor in calibers as huge as the .300 Weatherby. They will certainly shoot flatter than rounds like the 7mm-08, but the accompanying muzzle blast is fearsome. The .30-06 case in a short handgun barrel is the maximum we recommend.