

its creators with velocities of 1,700 fps with stiff charges of #2400. Cases stuck and came apart with maximum charges. So the shoulder was changed to give a more gentle sloping design and the .44/357 became known as the .357/44.

Currently .357/44 conversions are available from Seth Borton, 2560 San

Note with 158-160 gr. bullets, the .357/44 is 350 fps above the .357 Magnum, 250 fps above the .357 SuperMag, nearly 100 fps above the .357/45 Winchester Magnum, and almost equal to the 353 Casull. It outdoes the SuperMag and does it in a much more portable package and outdoes the .357/45 and nearly catch-

.357 Magnum 1,350 fps	.357 SuperMag 1,500 fps	353 Casull 1,750 fps	.357/44 1,700 fps	.357/45 Win. Mag. 1,625 fps
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Carlos Avenue, Castro Valley, CA 94546; phone: (415) 537-4800. Both the Ruger New Model .357 and the Ruger Bisley .357 are recommended as a basis for conversion to .357/44.

Borton's conversions do not follow the original. The brass is still necked to .357 from .44 Magnum, but the cylinder is bored as a .44 to the mouth of the brass and then the throats are .357 Magnum caliber. Strange, what? This is all accomplished by the use of nylon collars which we will explain shortly.

Brass for the .357/44 is easily made from RCBS dies. Lightly lubed .44 Magnum cases are run through the sizing die and one pass necks the .44 brass to .357/44. Cases are then primed, powdered, and bulletted but they are still not ready to use. An extra step is necessary of hand-fitting a specially designed black nylon collar to the necked down and loaded .357/44 Magnum to bring the outside dimensions of the case back up to .44 caliber.

Collars fit on quite precisely and snugly and serve to eliminate the setback often experienced with hot bottle-necked cartridges in sixgun chambers.

Collars that do not split can be used again but I have found them very likely to come off either in the ammo box when loaded ammunition is placed bullet side down or, worse, in the cylinder and then they have to be pushed or pulled out with something that will not scratch the chamber.

Reloading the .357/44 Bobcat requires removing the nylon collars from the fired brass before the cases can be placed in the loading cycle again. This is accomplished by running the empty brass with collars up through a .44 Special sizing die. The die siezes the collar and holds it as the .357/44 cartridge case is removed and subsequent collars push preceding collars up and out the top of the .44 Special die.

Why go through all of this? The answer is quite simple—velocity. Using 158 gr. jacketed bullets, this illegitimate .357 Magnum will drive 158 gr. jacketed bullets at 1,700 fps and do it in a standard-sized 7.5 inch barreled sixgun.

Let's look at where the .357/44 bobcat fits in the grand scheme of things when it comes to other .357's, namely the original .357 Magnum, the hot .357 of the 1980s, the .357 SuperMag, the sizzling .357 of the 1990s, the 353 Casull and the full bore semi-automatic in this caliber, the .357/45 Winchester Magnum.

es the 353 Casull and in both cases does it a whole lot less expensive. You pay your money and you take your choice.

Seeing no great need for making the .357 Magnum of the Bobcat persuasion into a .357 Swift, I totally avoid 110 gr. bullets and do not find 125 gr. bullets to be particularly accurate.

The .357/44 Bobcat is at its best when heavier bullets are used. Jacketed 140 gr. bullets are acceptable, 158 gr.ers are good and 180 gr. bullets are exceptional performers in this bottle-necked .357 Magnum.

Not wishing to get embroiled in the .357 Magnum: *Yes Or No For Hunting*, I will simply say that the .357/44 Bobcat is capable of running right alongside the 353 Casull with 158 gr. bullets but cannot match its performance with 180 gr. bullets. It outdoes the .357 SuperMag by a considerable margin.

So, if you believe you can hunt with a .357 Magnum, you can definitely hunt with a .357/44 and do it with a fairly light-weight sixgun as hunting handguns go.

My favorite loads for the .357/44 are built around the heavier bullets. BRP Bullets offers a 180 gr. hard cast bullet with a gas check that is superbly accurate in the .357/44 over 18.0 or 19.0 grs. of H110 for 1,450 to 1,500 fps.

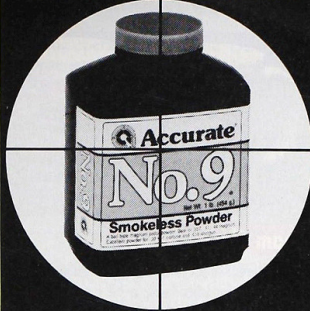
Switching to Hornady's new 180 gr. XTP-HP, I have yet to find a bad shooting load. Both 13.5 grs. of Blue Dot and 19.0 grs. of WW296 drive the 180 Hornady at 1,450 fps and is the only bullet I would seriously consider for hunting deer and black bear sized game.

Going down a notch to 158 gr. jacketed bullets, both Speer JHPs and Hornady XTP's clock out at 1,700 fps with 15.5 grs. of Blue Dot and shoot very well. If I were to use the .357/44 for hunting, this is the bullet and load I would choose for smaller deer, antelope and exotics. All loads are assembled with Federal #350 primers in Winchester or Federal .44 Magnum brass.

My test gun and dies came from friend Bill Barner and I was skeptical at first both as to performance and the nuisance factor in reloading. With experience, I have gained real respect for the .357/44 and found I did not really mind the extra reloading steps at all.

The .357/44 turns out to be a viable sixgun cartridge and one that could be used for hunting, silhouetting, or long-range shooting and do them all quite well.

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