

Let's Quit Smoking (and get t



Hard
Cast
Lead



Copper
Jacketed

By Larry Drake

When I select a bullet for competition shooting there are a lot of factors that help me decide which bullet is the best choice. The bullet has to be available, accurate, affordable and clean. Clean means a lot to me. Clean is so important that it's a higher priority than affordable. I'll pay more for clean because, to me, it's worth it. Traditionally, the choices have been between lead, plated, moly coated and jacketed bullets with each having pluses and minuses for my criteria. Now, with some new players on the field, it might be a good time to examine exactly which bullet is the best for the volume of shooting I like to do.

Straight lead is the cheapest, generally the smokiest and most prone to depositing lead where I don't want it – anywhere outside the berm I'm shooting the bullet into! Frequently, the smoke is caused by the lubricant that is applied to the outside of the bullet. This lubricant is necessary and it does help reduce fouling, but the smoke it produces is a problem in its own right. The problem is compounded when shooting at night under overhead lights. Light reflecting off of the smoke can obscure your vision and make hitting – or even seeing – the targets difficult. This smoke is caused by our choice of projectile and powder. The right combination can be nearly smoke free. The wrong combination can resemble a coal-fired freight

train. Combine that with little-to-no wind and you've got a problem. Leading is a problem as well. Everyone thinks of leading as something that happens in the bore. While that's certainly a problem as it can degrade accuracy and, in extreme cases, create a dangerous situation, it isn't the only place a handgun will lead. I shoot a lot of revolver competition and lead residue builds up above the

forcing cone and on the cylinder face. Left unattended, that lead build up can cause the cylinder to bind, and that super nice trigger job turns into a super heavy trigger. Thankfully, a little work with a wire brush and a scraper cleans it all up.

Plated bullets are a bit more expensive and generally have little-to-no problems with smoke or leaving deposits of lead. Unfortunately, plated bullets are often somewhat soft and cannot be pushed to higher velocities without shedding their plating

to reveal the softer lead underneath. There have also been many reports of reduced accuracy with plated bullets. That being said, I've used plated bullets for years in various shooting matches and haven't had any problems with them.

Jacketed bullets are the most expensive, but can be the cleanest, least smoky, bullets as well. Debates rage back and forth over whether or not they are as accurate as lead bullets but in the end they're the only choice for certain applications. Gas-operated rifles, like the AR15, or compensat-

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Copper
Plated



Hi-Tek
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ed handguns, for example, should never be run with lead bullets. Jacketed, and some plated bullets, are the only way to avoid fouling the weapon and clogging up the gas system or leading the compensator.

Over the last few years some new choices have appeared and one in particular is looking really promising. J&M Specialty of Australia is marketing a bullet coating they call Hi-Tek Lube. It is a polymer-based coating that completely encapsulates the projectile to reduce smoking and virtually eliminate leading. The coating is applied via a method that might best be described as "shake and bake." The lead bullets are sized before being placed in a bucket where a very small amount of the liquid polymer coating is drizzled onto them before they are gently shaken to distribute the coating. After dumping the bullets out to let the coating dry, they're baked in a convection type of oven to cure the polymer. Once cooled, the process is repeated a second time to help build up a nice thick layer of the coating. Once the final cooling process is complete, the bullets are ready for resizing. No lube or other prep is necessary.

Lead bullets coated with moly, or molybdenum disulfide, have been around for several years as well and they offer some of the same benefits as the Hi-Tek coating. Smoke and leading are reduced, and the cost is usually in line with the

Hi-Tek coated bullets and a bit less than the plated variety. They can be kind of messy during the actual reloading process as the moly coating can come off on your hands. That kind of mess doesn't bother me, just as long as the bullet shoots clean.

I've been shooting the Hi-Tek coated bullets offered by SNS Cast Bullets for several months now and I'm pretty happy with the results.

They're readily available both online and through a local retailer (check the selection out in this very catalog). They are accurate enough that I shot a one-hole group at 25 yards with my 627 (even if it was kind of a big hole). Pricing at Dillon is \$78, which puts them at a whopping \$4 more than the uncoated bullets. That's right I said \$4. They sell this product as a kit that you can apply yourself, but I think for \$4 per thousand more I'll let the pros take care of coating the bullets. Last, but not

least, they are clean. Clean enough, anyway. I've shot several thousand of them through my pistols and while there's some smoke, it isn't enough for me to notice while shooting. As far as leading goes, I haven't had to get the wire brush or the scraper out since I've been using these bullets.

In the end, I may not have completely stopped smoking, but I think I've found a patch, or, if I want to be really current, an e-cigarette. Either way I've got less smoke, no lead and more money in my pocket. I think I'll take that compromise.

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