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When tasked with testing out Wilson Combat's deadly new .300 HAM'R round, I decided to build a sweet-looking and fine-running custom AR-15. Premium components came together to create a rifle that shoots as good as it looks. *Photos by Brandon Pleimann*
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LAYING THE HAM'R DOWN!



BY KEVIN REESE

WILSON COMBAT'S NEW .300 HAM'R IS ONE SERIOUSLY DEADLY FERAL HOG ROUND.



Unlike my good friend and fellow hog-slayer Todd Huey, who undoubtedly also has a feature hidden in these pages, I haven't counted the dirt naps I've dished out. I still remember getting his text message after he'd downed hog No. 6,000, and since then he's far surpassed that body count.

To be honest, I have no idea how many corn thieves have dropped to my bullets and broadheads. All I know is that the number is high, as is likely the case for anyone else with a penchant for bacon-making. Here in Texas, killing pigs is a business that happens 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 365 days a year.

As my quest to thin the Lone Star hog herd continues, I've taken it upon myself to try out all sorts of rifles, ammunition and archery equipment. I've done so both out of my own curiosity and for the benefit of other hunters seeking knowledge about new gear. Recently, I had the opportunity to scratch my itchy trigger finger with Wilson Combat's new .300 HAM'R. Always up for a DIY challenge, I decided to build my own custom AR-15 to test out the round, rather than run a production rifle.

Here follows my review of the lethal and light-recoiling new .300 HAM'R round, as well as my thoughts and opinions on some of the gun components I chose to use on the build.

.300 HAM'R NERD TALK

To put it as plainly as possible, the .300 HAM'R is based on the common .223 Remington parent case, so it doesn't require a special bolt carrier

group. However, the HAM'R is necked up to accommodate a .308 bullet, and it hands-down outperforms .30-30 Win., 6.8 SPC, 7.62x39 and .300 Blackout in both velocity and energy.

For hog hunting, I have high hopes the HAM'R will become an iconic cartridge. I just hope other ammunition manufacturers see the light and begin to produce rounds for the mass consumer market.

The .300 HAM'R feeds exceptionally well from standard .300 Blackout magazines. As a note here, the most reliable .300 Blackout magazines I've used to date are from Lancer Systems. These were my magazine of choice again for this project.

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

They say a house is only as good as the foundation it's built on. So let's start

this discussion of the .300 HAM'R at its roots: the receiver and handguard.

For this build, I chose Phoenix Weaponry's billet 7075-T7 aircraft-grade aluminum receiver and handguard set. Having worked with Phoenix Weaponry on a couple of other projects over the past three years or so, I was excited to give more of its components a try. Phoenix Weaponry has established quite a reputation for producing top-quality rifles, suppressors and other firearms parts. In fact, its PW-338 suppressor is one of the best-performing cans I've had the pleasure of using.

True to its reputation, Phoenix Weaponry delivered big. The fit and form of the receiver set I used were exceptional. While the receiver set doesn't get "stuck" when you fit the upper and lower components together, it also doesn't rattle at all. The upper receiver also came with a billet aluminum dust cover/ejection port cover.

Phoenix Weaponry's handguard is also top grade. The tube-shaped 15-inch handguard included a gas tube cover, barrel nut and precisely machined, gnarled texturing throughout. For both function and aesthetics, I'll be using more of these handguards in future builds.

I often joke that it's all about looking good in the woods. While I've been running with this joke for at least 20 years, especially with respect to camouflage, it's somewhat true. If I'm going to build a custom rifle, I definitely want it to pop. Rocky Mountain Tactical Coatings handles quite a bit of Phoenix Weaponry's custom finish business, and worked its magic on my build, too.

I wanted the rifle to have an aggressive look while still being subdued. When my receiver and handguard set arrived back from RMTTC with an incredibly rich and polished paint job, I was pumped. The finish I selected was a battle-worn tungsten Cerakote.

A LOOK TOPSIDE

Considering the significance of this rifle's cartridge and the folks behind its creation, the other no-less-important foundational component for this project was the barrel. It came directly from Wilson Combat.

The company has a top-shelf consumer reputation, and it's known

throughout the firearms industry that Wilson produces excellent products. Indeed, Bill Wilson has established a legacy.

In a world filled with cheap gun parts that sometimes under-deliver on performance, my experience with Wilson Combat proves true the old saying: *You get what you pay for.*



For me, the system has worked well running both suppressed and non-suppressed.

Having read positive reviews and feedback about Iron City Rifle Works products, I picked up its S-1 Drop-In Bolt Carrier Group. The S-1 BCG is highly polished and boasts an incredibly durable Ranger



Building a custom rifle can be a labor of love, no doubt. The best builds start with a clear vision for the finished product's purpose. This one was destined to be a lightweight and accurate hog-hunting rig. *Photos by Kevin Reese*



Wilson Combat's 18-inch, fluted, match-grade Tactical Hunter barrel showed up at my door with a premium black Armor-Tuff coating. It boasts a 416R stainless-steel construction, 1:15 RH twist and 6-groove button rifling for enhanced suppressed and non-suppressed shooting. I added an ASR muzzle brake, with plans to pair the rifle with my SilencerCo Chimera .300 suppressor.

For gassing, I selected a Wilson Combat gas tube and SLR Rifleworks Sentry 7 Adjustable Gas Block.

Using a LabRadar chronograph, the author recorded an impressive average muzzle velocity of 2,551 fps and energy of 1,807 ft.-lbs. with the Speer 125-grain TNT ammo. The 130-grain Hot-Cor cartridges were clocked at 2,515 fps, with energy at 1,826 ft.-lbs. *Photos by Kevin Reese*

Grey Nanocomposite PVD coating. So far, I've been impressed with the S1's fit, form and function. (I'll have a lot more on function later.)

I finished off the upper receiver with a Timber Creek Enforcer ambidextrous charging handle in black/tungsten.

SO ABOVE, SO BELOW

I wanted my rifle's lower receiver to be outfitted with similar lightweight, top-performing components. I installed Timber Creek's tungsten and black billet controls, including its Ambi SS Safety Selector and AR EMR extended mag release. I also added Timber Creek's skeletonized, billet-machined aluminum pistol grip dressed in black.

To round out the rest of the rifle's guts, I turned to Luth-AR for a stock tube, lower parts kit and buffer assembly. I've used Luth-AR buffer systems, stock tubes and small parts in a dozen or so builds over the past few years. The company has yet to let me down, and I now consider these essential parts to all my custom rigs.



While hunting with Three Curl Outfitters in Waxahachie, Texas, the author and his custom .300 HAM'R downed this big boar. Photos by Kevin Reese and Brandon Pleimann (far right)



I likely would have installed a Luth-AR MBA stock on this build, too, had I not wandered into the WMD Guns booth at the 2019 NRA Show.

WMD Guns president Wynn Atterbury introduced me to the Sling Stock. Sounds cool, right? It definitely is. The Sling Stock adjusts to multiple length-of-pull positions and, as its name suggests, includes an integral retracting sling. Pushing a button allows the sling to be extended out from the bottom of the stock to form a single-point sling system.

The front of the sling attaches to the stock via a QD flush-cup adapter. Adding a flush-cup mount to a hand-guard allows the system to be used as a 2-point sling.

To complete the build, I needed a crisp trigger. I chose CMC's Single Stage Drop-in 2.5-pound Competition

Trigger. CMC was my first foray into flat triggers. As a gun writer, I've seen all sorts of triggers in my day — from baby butterfly light to chainsaw winch heavy.

I know enough to say that all triggers have their place — some are destined to be written about in magazine articles and others belong in the trash. The triggers made by CMC deserve to be complimented. They're a solid choice, whether you're dropping corn-thieving swine or shooting competitively.

TRIGGER TIME

Let's address the elephant in the room. While Wilson Combat's .300 HAM'R is exciting, and news travels fast, the cartridge definitely lacks widespread availability. As of this writing, if you're hoping to add a .300 HAM'R to your arsenal, you're likely going to need to



order cartridges from Wilson Combat. For handloading, you'll need to acquire bullets, cases, etc. from Wilson Combat, Speer, Brownells, Midway or Starline.

To keep things simple, I chose to test my rifle with Speer's 125-grain TNT jacketed hollow point for target shooting. For hunting, I selected Speer's 130-grain Hot-Cor load. Both are readily available from Wilson Combat.

For initial testing, I went to my happy place: Triple C Shooting Range in Cresson, Texas. It's a low-stress, long-range shooting playground nestled deep in the interior of a 3,000-acre working ranch.

I tested the rifle with two optics. The first was a Sightmark Pinnacle 5-30x50 first-focal-plane riflescope for grouping and long-range fun. Then I swapped the day optic for a Pulsar Trail XP38 thermal scope to prepare for nighttime hog hunting. Underneath, for rock-solid support, I added an Accu-Tac BR-4

Gen 2 bipod. Of course, my SilencerCo Chimera suppressor completed the package.

My first shot from the .300 HAM'R was a bit surreal. I expected stiff recoil shooting the .308 cal. bullet at high velocity from a 7-pound AR-15. However, thanks largely to the suppressor and bipod, felt recoil was similar to that of a .223 Rem.

After minor gas block tuning, I had my rifle cycling both of the Speer

rounds like a Swiss clock. The setup provided consistent bolt lock-back on empty and brass ejection at roughly 3 o'clock. That was plenty good enough for me!

Grouping also was exceptional. Both cartridges delivered MOA accuracy. However, the 125-grain TNT round actually punched a sub-MOA 6-shot group in the form of two vertical 3-shot keyholes that measured roughly .375 inches tall and no more than .375 inches apart.

I also ran the 125-grain TNTs out to 500 yards. At that distance, I shot a sub 2-MOA 5-shot group on steel. Admittedly, the wind was light, and shooting conditions were excellent.

Using a LabRadar chronograph, I recorded an impressive average muzzle velocity of 2,551 fps and energy of 1,807 ft.-lbs. with the 125-grain TNT ammo. The 130-grain Hot-Cor cartridges were clocked at 2,515 fps. with energy at 1,826 ft.-lbs. The G1 ballistic coefficients are .341 and .248, respectively. Color me impressed!

MAKIN' BACON

Having good friends in low places is never a bad thing, especially when their business is guiding hog hunts on over 80,000 acres of north-central Texas crop fields and woodlands. I'm talking about my buddies at Three Curl Outfitters in Waxahachie, Texas. They were nice enough to let me test out my .300 HAM'R build on a nighttime hog hunt.

On the hunt, I was with Three Curl guide and good friend Luke Johnson.

Character plug here: I've scarcely seen other guides work as hard as Luke does. The next man in line to take over his family's multi-generational farming business, Luke knows the crops, the ground and the pig activity therein better than just about anybody. And he's an all-around fun hunting buddy to boot.

It wasn't quite 10:00 p.m. when we lit out into the darkness with rifles, ammo, thermal devices and a handful of Bang energy drinks. (I'm addicted to their Pina Colada and Starburst flavor.) An hour later, we dropped into a field Luke had been watching closely on the days leading up to the hunt.

A sounder of pigs was rooting the far edge of the field roughly 1,000 yards away. We set off on the stalk, but just a few hundred yards into it, the hogs grew restless with rooting and slipped back into the dense treeline. Back into the truck we went to scout other nearby fields.

We drove and glassed a couple other fields before trying more unsuccessful stalks on drifting pigs. The



wind continued to pick up throughout the night, and that made the hunting tough. Finally, just before we agreed to call

off the hunt for the night, we glassed a lone boar slipping out of a treeline in the same field as our first stalk of the night. As luck would have it, he trotted in and dropped into a wash just a few hundred yards away.

We slid out of the buggy. Luke grabbed his Pulsar Helion thermal monocular, and I fell in behind him with the .300 HAM'R and my Kopfjäger Reaper Grip rest. Just two hundred yards into the stalk, we came to the edge of the wash where we'd lost sight of the boar. Through my thermal monocular, I could see him rooting comfortably just 95 yards in front of me.

Luke called the shot, and I settled my rifle into the Reaper Grip's saddle while simultaneously powering on my Trail thermal riflescope. A quick dial of the distance focus, and I was ready.

Luke counted down: "Three, two, one . . ."

At one, a single shot from the aptly named .300 HAM'R burst through the boar's cranium, striking adjacent to his left ear. The boar buckled where he stood. It was 3:00 a.m., and we still had work to do. Luke wasted no time in retrieving the buggy. We loaded up the big boar and headed back to Three Curl's lodge.

FINAL SHOTS

To say I'm impressed with Bill Wilson's .300 HAM'R is an understatement. While some might compare his cartridge to the .300 Blackout, it's not that at all. The HAM'R is far superior. It's an ultra-cool, hard-hitting yet obscure ammo that's bad medicine on feral hogs.

Again, my only criticism as of now is ammo availability. I'd love to see the popularity of the .300 HAM'R grow to the extent other producers pick up the cartridge. Still, after testing and a single hunt, the .300 HAM'R ranks among my top AR-15 hog-hunting cartridge picks. If you're in the market, it's well worth pulling the trigger. **TOP**