



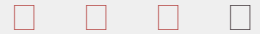
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“The claim that bear spray works better than a firearm to protect you from bears is junk science”

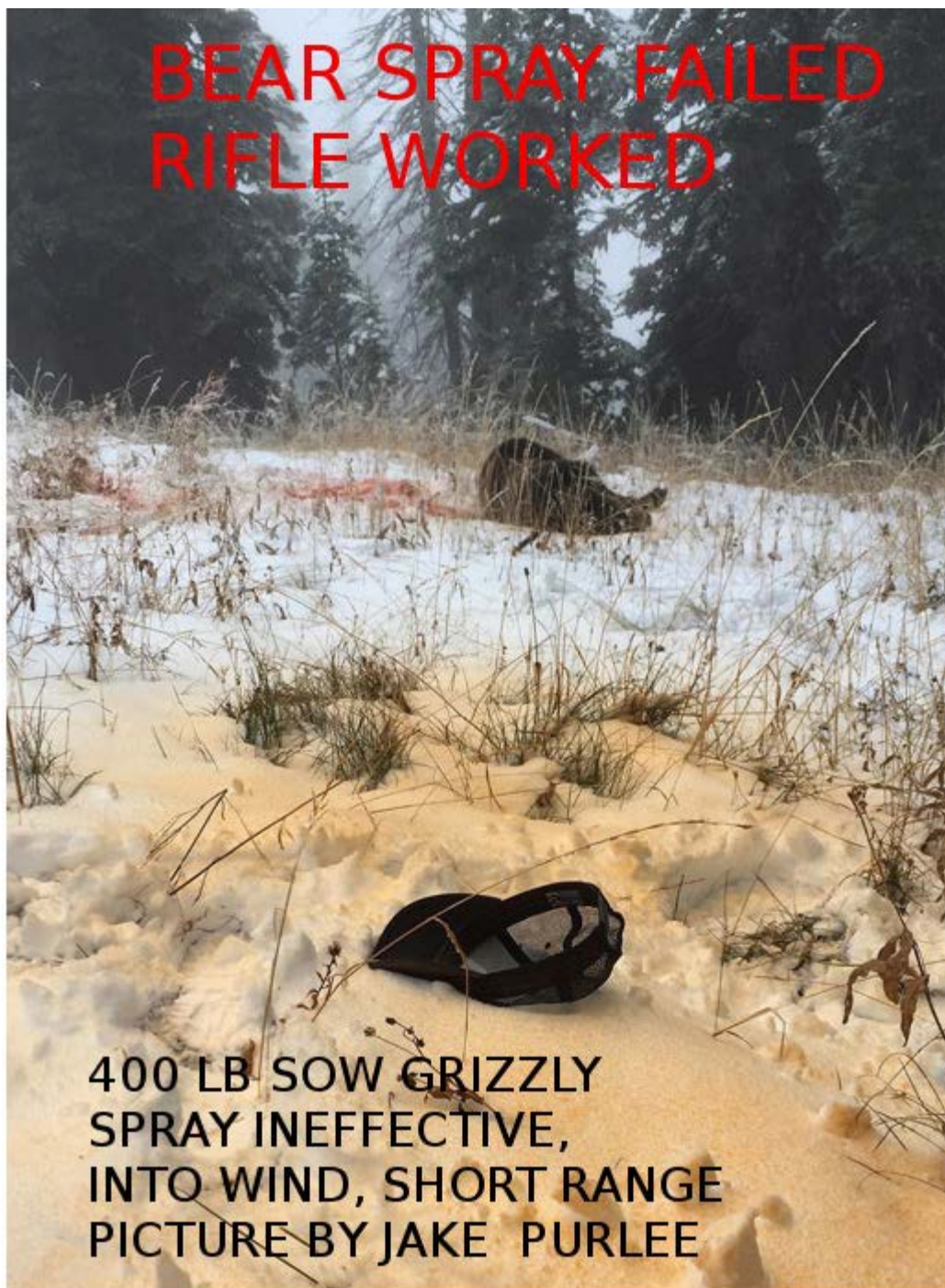
BY DEAN WEINGARTEN | JAN 02, 2018 | [94 COMMENTS](#)

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Back in 2015, Jake Purlee and his friends were **hunting** elk and wolves. Encountering evidence of bears, they decided to leave the area. The two hunters and two companions were returning to their **truck** after an exhausting and wet hunt in fog and a foot of snow. They were attacked by a sow grizzly bear. Jake Purlee had a .300 Weatherby **magnum**, but dropped it in favor of bear spray. The Weatherby MK V belongs to Jake's father, and is a right handed version. Jake is left handed. **From gohunt.com:**

"F***! No! Bear! No!" I screamed in terror as she started snapping her jaws and

bounding towards my friends and me. Each snap sounded like an **axe** hitting concrete. I got behind my one friend who was armed and threw both my gun and my **camera** on the ground in panic after the **bear spray**. She was terrifying and extremely vocal, huffing and grunting. The person who had the bear spray shakily handed it to me without the safety on, ready to go.

I ran to my friend's side to spray her, but, by then, it was too late: she had already bluff charged us once and was almost on top of us. My friend fired off a **round** and hit her right on the top of her shoulder, but she wasn't fazed. He fired two more shots as I was spraying, but the **spray** wouldn't go more than 10' and, at this moment, she was at 15'.

The spray was out in what felt like just a couple of seconds and the wind had pushed it back into our faces. It burned my eyes, lips, and nose like hell. We were all coughing and wheezing immediately. My friend then grabbed my .300 Weatherby and started firing. After he emptied it we ran back into the trees and he handed it to me, screaming for more **cartridges**. I reloaded and put one more in her head. It was then deathly silent.

Such events make a great story, but are not considered news. They remain mostly unreported. The bear spray failed and the rifles did not. Jake followed the advise of many who claim that bear spray is more effective than firearms in defense against bears.

One of the unarmed companions had bear spray. Two limitations of bear spray existed: Cold temperatures, and a head wind.

Using the **bear spray** caused another problem: the effects on the defenders. In this **case**, the shooter was able to overcome the **bear spray**, grab Jake's dropped .300 Weatherby, and make effective use of it.

I contacted Jake and he filled in details.

His friend had a .300 Winchester Magnum. The friend fired three shots of .300 Win **mag** and then three shots of .300 **Weatherby** mag. Jake was using 185 grain Berger bullets in the **Weatherby**. Jake fired the last shot at the grizzly.

All seven shots hit the bear. Jake has since acquired a left handed Weatherby MK V.

While people claim that bear spray is more effective than **firearms** for defense against bears, **actual studies do not show that** to be true. The misunderstanding is caused by comparing studies of **bear spray** use against non-aggressive bears to defensive uses of **firearms** against actual attacking bears.

The study involving firearms most commonly used to compare to the use of bear spray is: *Efficacy of firearms for bear deterrence in Alaska* by Tom S. Smith, Stephen Herrero, and others, from 2012. The researchers refuse to share their data. That's always a bad sign.

The study selected only 269 incidents in Alaska from 1883-2009. Bear inflicted injuries **occurred in 151 of the incidents**, or 56 percent. The selection of the incidents was heavily biased toward incidents where humans were injured. **From the study:**

First, because bear-inflicted injuries are closely covered by the media, we likely did not miss many records where people were injured. Therefore, even if more incidents had been made available through the Alaska DLP database, we anticipate that these would have contributed few, if any, additional human injuries. Second, including more DLP records would have increased the number of bears killed by **firearms**. Finally, additional records would have likely improved firearm success rates from those reported here, but to what extent is unknown.

A previous study, *CHARACTERISTICS OF NONSPORT MORTALITIES TO BROWN AND BLACK BEARS AND HUMAN INJURIES FROM BEARS IN ALASKA*, done in 1999, considered 2,000 incidents in Alaska where bears were killed in **defense** of life and property (the DLP records mentioned above). In that study, only two percent of the incidents resulted in injuries to humans. That study also has a selection bias, as only incidents in which the bear was killed are recorded in the database used.

The study on bear spray efficacy that is compared to the efficacy of **firearms** was also authored by Tom S. Smith. *Efficacy of Bear Deterrent Spray in Alaska* examined 83 incidents with bears, humans, and bear spray, was published in 2008. It is not clear how the incidents were chosen.

The **firearms** study selected incidents of **bear attacks**. The bear spray study selected

incidents where bear spray was involved in bear-human interactions. That is a significant difference.

Dave Smith, a prominent author on how to deal with bears, reported that only one third of the bear spray incidents in the *Efficacy of bear Deterrent Spray in Alaska* involved aggressive bears, while all of the firearms incidents involved aggressive bears. From **Dave Smith**:

Fact check: Efficacy of Bear Deterrent Spray in Alaska (2008) shows bear spray was 3 for 9 vs. charging grizzlies when people had time to use their **spray**. The study did not include data on incidents when people did not have time to use their spray or the "success" rate for bear spray would be lower.

Fifty of 72 incidents involved bears that were acting curious or seeking garbage or food before being sprayed. It is unethical and moronic to compare the results of the Alaska bear spray study to the results of the Alaska firearms study, which examined 269 carefully selected incidents involving **gun** use during "bear **attacks**."

The two studies by Tom S. Smith, *Efficacy of firearms for bear deterrence in Alaska* and *Efficacy of Bear Deterrent Spray in Alaska*, are the two studies most commonly used to claim that bear spray is more effective than firearms for stopping **bear attacks**. The article in outsideonline.com is an example.

The studies use significantly different types of encounters in their data sets. The comparisons are not valid.

Bear spray is useful for dealing with curious bears. It is a valid option for people who are not comfortable with firearms or who do not want to carry a **firearm**.

Name (required)

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Message

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COMMENTS



jwm says:

January 2, 2018 at 20:17

Bears, or any other animal, don't read reports and studies. As soon as you fall into that 'the [book](#) says animal x acts like this' trap you wind up on the menu.

As soon as you leave your house you're on the food chain. Act like it.

Reply



Geoff PR says:

January 2, 2018 at 21:43

It seems to me the best bet if going out in the wilderness is to never do it alone.

And to make sure beforehand the parties going out know what is expected of each other to do should things start to go sideways.

And a lever-action in .44 [mag](#) would be a good idea to carry...

Reply



uncommon_sense says:

January 2, 2018 at 21:59

Geoff PR,

"And a lever-action in .44 [mag](#) would be a good idea to carry..."

That [lever](#) action would be even better chambered in .45-70 Government — especially if you are dealing with 800+ pound grizzlies. (See my post below.)

Having said all that, I would have to think that a lever-action [rifle](#) in .44 Magnum shooting HEAVY (and hopefully hardcast lead bullets) should work pretty well on bears and hogs under 800 pounds. Note that a 16-inch barrel and stout loads would launch a 305 grain [bullet](#) at something like 1,700 fps which is just shy of 2,000 ft-lbs. energy at the muzzle. That is a world of hurt.

Reply



Jeff says:

January 3, 2018 at 09:01

.44 [Mag](#). is hardly preferable to .300 [Mag](#). If you're hunting deer (or elk or squirrels) in bear country, carry a bear rifle.

Reply



uncommon_sense says:

January 3, 2018 at 10:44

Jeff,

I would take a lever-action [rifle](#) in .44 Magnum over a typical [rifle](#) in .300 [Winchester](#) Magnum for bear defense every time.

Reasons:

(1) Lever-action rifle is much shorter and therefore much more maneuverable than typical rifles in .300 Winchester Magnum.

(2) Lever-action rifle with [iron](#) sights gets you on [target](#) immediately for a charging bear at close range. Typical rifles in .300 Winchester Magnum with [scopes](#) are impossible to get on target with a charging bear at close [range](#) .

(3) Lever-action rifle shooting .43 caliber, 300 grain hardcast lead bullets will deliver devastating terminal ballistics to a charging bear at close range. Full power loads will develop about 1,700 fps at the [muzzle](#) and hit the bear with almost 2,000 ft-lbs. of energy.

(4) Lever-action [rifle](#) in .44 Magnum enables rapid follow-up shots unlike typical rifles in .300 Winchester Magnum which have bolt actions.

That .43 caliber HEAVY hardcast bullet will not deform upon impact with bone and will penetrate something like 48 to 60 inches of tough hide, muscle, and bone and create a 1+ inch permanent wound channel. (Think of that [bullet](#) as a giant "coring" [tool](#) that will remove a 1 to 1.5 inch [cylinder](#) out of the attacking bear.) You cannot say the same about any bullet coming out of a .300 Winchester Magnum rifle.

Now, if you are actually hunting bears and expect shots at 100 to 300 yards, then a rifle in .300 Winchester Magnum would be a far better choice than a lever-action [rifle](#) in .44 Magnum. This article and my comment was not about hunting though.

Of course if you are hunting it is usually not practical to carry two [rifles](#) so you would stick to your .300 [Winchester](#) Magnum bolt-action rifle as your single long gun. In that scenario I would carry a large .44 Magnum or .454 Casull [revolver](#) with a 6-inch barrel and 300+ grain hardcast lead bullets for bear charges at close range — and I would carry it in a shoulder holster outside my coat.



Desert Dave says:

January 3, 2018 at 17:49

[Glock](#) G40 in 10 mm 15 [Rounds](#) of Buffalo Bore or Underwood full [power](#) loads. Best bear spray made!

Reply



American Patriot says:

January 3, 2018 at 17:17

Silly Rabbit, everybody knows bear spray is for liberals & [guns](#) are for conservatives or else we'd have mass shootings every where. If they really wanted a bear free zone they should have put up signs!

Reply



Uh-hu says:

January 2, 2018 at 20:23

[Buffalo bore](#) 500 gr 45-70 buster FTW. those Goofs where caught with their [pants](#) down and.....WHY THE F**K WOULD YOU THROW YOU G**D**N RIFLE DOWN DURING A BEAR ATTACK!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Luck they're not bear shit right now.

Reply



Hank says:

January 2, 2018 at 20:30

Because they believed the [iron](#) clad bullshit about bear spray. Criticize them, but don't be too hard, there's a ton of ignorance on this subject. Decades of hippy liberal studies and governmental push to to save the cute fuzzy wuzzies has lead to a generation of people that think a wild animal can be deterred with table condiments.

Reply



Desert Dave says:

January 3, 2018 at 17:51

[Spray](#) liberally on yourself to give you that Cajun flavor, bears love!

Reply



Gov. William J Le Petomane says:

January 2, 2018 at 20:52

This was back in 2015. By now they should be a small shrub where the bear shat them out.

Reply



Uh-hu says:

January 2, 2018 at 21:21

heh-heh

Reply



BLoving says:

January 2, 2018 at 22:41

A pepper bush?

Reply



Tumbles says:

January 2, 2018 at 23:21

Gold^



uncommon_sense says:

January 2, 2018 at 21:33

There is another possible explanation for why they threw their rifle down: aiming through a [rifle scope](#) at a target that is 15 feet away, about 4 feet in diameter, featureless, and approaching rapidly is impossible. Thus, their [rifles](#) were only as useful as their ability to point their [rifles](#) accurately according to “muscle memory” without the benefit of any sights.

I can easily imagine some people making the snap decision to throw down what they figure is a useless firearm in favor of a can of bear spray.

If you are carrying a scoped rifle, this is a compelling reason to carry a large [Magnum revolver](#) with simple [iron](#) sights: the revolver allows you to put accurate shots on targets that are 15 feet away. Bonus: a large [revolver](#) is far more maneuverable than a rifle in heavy brush and you can even fire it one-handed in an emergency. That could literally be the difference between life and death.

Reply



anonymoose says:

January 2, 2018 at 22:08

A [red dot sight](#) on your revolver might help with the aiming part better than plain old iron sights. Aimpoints can take the abuse of the Alaskan wilderness and magnum revolvers.

Reply



BLoving says:

January 2, 2018 at 22:52

Nope. [Iron](#) sights.

Fancy sights are for hunting [guns](#) , when you have the advantage of ambush and surprise. A SHTF gun requires simplicity, speed and 100% reliability.

Don't complicate things with fancy electronic doodads that might fail or get snagged on anything when a hungry bruin is about to add you to his winter fat layer. Just point and shoot... repeatedly.



Bob Cormack says:

January 3, 2018 at 13:25

Re; red [dots](#) on pistols:

I find that a red dot sight is easy to acquire when I use my 'standard' two-handed range stance. However, if you have to [aim](#) one-handed in a direction not directly in front of you it [can](#) take way too long to find that [dot](#). Probably lots of practice would make this quicker, but if I expect to shoot at short [range](#) in daylight, I would greatly prefer the iron sights.



ColdNorth says:

January 3, 2018 at 09:14

This incident reminds me of why the old African big-game hunters had one guy with a big stopper [gun](#) (the old 8 and 4 [bore](#) smoothbores) just in [case](#) . It might not make for as much fun on a hunt, but having one guy carrying the appropriate rifle with just irons would be useful (in addition to the revolver). Around here, several hunters have been surprised and attacked by bears after shooting a deer or elk or similar. Having one guy armed and on watch would help minimize that danger.

Reply



uncommon_sense says:

January 3, 2018 at 11:01

"Having one guy armed and on [watch](#) would help minimize that danger."

Agreed!



Hank says:

January 2, 2018 at 20:27

Finally. A solid article that lays out the truth. Chemical weapons have serious limitations. The best weapon to have to defend your life from an attacking animal or human is a [gun](#) , not hot sauce. Carry the biggest [gun](#) you can effectively carry.

Reply



Stereodude says:

January 3, 2018 at 09:11

I don't know about that. I'm guessing VX or Sarin would end the threat of the bear pretty quickly, but you might not have time to don the chemical proof hazmat style suit before using it.

Reply



Ralph says:

January 2, 2018 at 21:01

Darwin would agree that any damn fool who believes that bear spray is superior to a rifle in a proper [caliber](#) deserves to be eaten by a bear.

Reply



uncommon_sense says:

January 2, 2018 at 21:02

I would only carry these [firearm](#) platforms for self-defense against bears — especially grizzlies:
(1) .45-70 Government lever-action rifle

(2) 12 or 20 gauge shotgun shooting proper Brenneke slugs only

(3) .44 Magnum or larger revolver shooting HEAVY hardcast lead [bullets](#) *

You will notice the common denominator in all of these firearm platforms: they shoot BIG AND HEAVY projectiles. As the saying goes, "There is no replacement for displacement."

* There is no doubt in my mind that .45-70 Government rifles and shotguns are superior to large [Magnum](#) revolvers for stopping bears — especially grizzlies. I only list large Magnum revolvers as a viable platform for people who cannot or will not carry suitable [rifles](#) or shotguns.

Reply



Uh-hu says:

January 2, 2018 at 21:31

When I'm in the bush I like to carry my [Henry](#) H010 IT's Light, short and powerful I'd carry that over my .300 win mag; too heavy, long with heavy [recoil](#) for follow up shots For me.

Reply



uncommon_sense says:

January 2, 2018 at 21:44

Yes sir (or ma'am). Your [Henry](#) .45-70 Government lever-action rifle [shooting](#) a 400 grain hardcast lead bullet should be able to drop anything in North America in its tracks.

Reply



MLee says:

January 2, 2018 at 22:23

@uncommon_sense

That's on my wish list....as are a lot of things. I want the [Marlin](#) 1895GBL in 45/70.

I [camp](#) out in my home state of Montana and there are bears around.

But really, a huge parts of bear [safety](#) is like gun safety, safety is what's between the ears.

But having a bear gun is a great way to justify blowing some scratch on a new gun HUH! 

Reply



ORCON says:

January 2, 2018 at 22:34

Mhmm, I grew up in Troy. Bears weren't super common but the only time you'd run into them is when you least expected them. Better to be prepared.

Reply



MLee says:

January 2, 2018 at 23:20

@ ORCON

Right near Troy is where I saw my last bear. It was at Spar Lake, which is 20 miles south of Troy, and it was just like you said, right when you least expect it. This time it was just a small black bear crossing the road. Looked like it was headed down to the lake. I was there camping.



ORCON says:

January 2, 2018 at 21:06

There's three kinds of people that prefer bearspray to firearms; bears, the ignorant and people who sell bear spray. And we all know bears are terrible people.

Reply



ai338 says:

January 3, 2018 at 00:55

Bears are great people. Trying to live their life and find their next meal. Bear spray salesmen, on the other hand....

Reply



TX_Lawyer says:

January 2, 2018 at 22:10

“The researchers refuse to share their data.” – According to my statistics professor, that’s not science.

Reply



John J. McCarthy, Jr. says:

January 2, 2018 at 22:19

Do not tell me a spray is more effective than a bullet.

You can try to tell me this, but I ain’t listening.

Reply



Soup's ON! says:

January 3, 2018 at 00:22

Bear spray is WAY MORE EFFECTIVE than a bullet, if you are preparing dinner. For the bear. And you need to add a little pepper to the bear’s stew. Just because they are animals, doesn’t mean they don’t enjoy a little spice in their man meat.

Reply



MilitantCentrist says:

January 3, 2018 at 08:26

“Man meat.” Phrasing, dude. Phrasing.

Reply



Big Bill says:

January 3, 2018 at 10:52

“man meat”

I think the proper term is “long pig.”

Reply



Mongoos says:

January 5, 2018 at 07:59

This really isn't getting any better...



Michael says:

January 2, 2018 at 22:52

Living on Kodiak Island, I talked to fish and game and the wildlife refuge staff...12 gauge shotgun, iron sights, a sling with slugs (3") is their preferred weapon. That settled it for me. the local club does a "bear charge shoot" with 5 gallon buckets rolling at you out the brush...not entirely realistic but gets you thinking and shooting.

Reply



Gary says:

January 3, 2018 at 18:16

Shotgun is the "do most" thing in shooting sports. Thanks for the logic hit.

Reply



David Russell says:

January 2, 2018 at 22:56

Did not see anyone mention the importance of aiming for the right places on the bear. Obviously, if you are just pointing at the bear you need the biggest cannon you can lift. How big of a gun does it take to shoot through the upper palate of the open mouth? This would assume the bear is not charging so fast you can't really be fussy how you aim. But in cases where you actually could shoot in the mouth or under the jaw, would a smaller caliber penetrate? I read an article where a woman

killed a massive grizzly with a .22 single shot rifle, into the side of the head near the temple.
Interesting contrast to the big gun stories.

Reply



ORCON says:

January 2, 2018 at 23:07

I get where you're going but the whole point is to drop the bear before it gets the drop on you. If you're waiting on a soft pallet shot or contact distance, it's like rolling a d20 against a 19 point circumstance modifier. Look at what Randy Garrett had to say about appropriate bruin ammo.

Reply



anaxis says:

January 3, 2018 at 06:16

Really, it depends on the GM.

If He's playing favorites, lacks the patience, or has a devious imagination, you might get lucky with some deus ex machina shit, discover your Magnum is really a sentient +5 Dyspeptic Dwarven Boomstick of Unerring Destructification, or are allowed to reroll a save that He "missed".....

Me? I hedge against a lazy/inattentive GM by training with gear generally identified as being overkill for at least the next 3 levels, and having easily replenishable ammo far outside of major trading posts.

Oh, we were talking IRL?

I was too. Maybe. ;P

Reply



ozzallos says:

January 5, 2018 at 01:55

Okay, you both win best comment in thread.

I award you five internets.



Hank says:

January 3, 2018 at 03:38

The woman who used a .22 to kill the bear was hunting it, not being hunted. Just because someone managed to kill a bear with a .22 once doesn't mean everyone should throw out their magnums and pack .22's. If you're the one waiting, and stalking, you get to choose the time and place of your shot. When your being rushed by the bear you will not have that luxury. Bears have been killed historically using primitive spears and bows. That doesn't mean it's a good idea to use a sharp stick to fight a bear just because the Vikings could do it.

Reply



Zrbra Dun says:

January 3, 2018 at 14:57

Actually Inuit Natives used to hunt and kill Polar bears regularly with Remington Nylon .22lr they would locate the bear and shoot a magazine into the guts then trail the bear till it died.

Before that they regularly killed Polar Bears with a compressed bone like a spring in a piece of frozen seal blubber, the Bear ate the blubber, it thawed in his guts and the bone sprung open while the Inuit trailed the bear to it's demise.

Now as for me, I would if in Bear country carry the biggest, baddest magnum Handgun, Carbine or Rifle I could shoot and I would try to stay the heck out of any bear property. They say Grizzly bears can be tracked by their scat which contains Granola, bear bells and smells like bear spray.

Reply



Dean Weingarten says:

January 3, 2018 at 05:18

Bella Twin was the Cree woman who shot a world record grizzly in May of 1953. She wasn't hunting it. She used a Cooney Ace 1 .22 single shot rifle and .22 longs. Here is the account:

<http://gunwatch.blogspot.com/2017/06/bella-twin-little-woman-with-little-gun.html>

Reply



FedUp says:

January 3, 2018 at 09:37

Right. She was a trapper, not a bear hunter.

The .22 was carried for zapping trapped animals in the brain.

Reply



Nam62 says:

January 2, 2018 at 23:00

I agree with all of the above. I would be carrying my Marlin 1895 GS with 405 grn. hot handloads in bear country. If my Marlin was not available I would be carrying my Rossi M-92 in 45 Colt 255 grn. also with hot handloads.

Reply



Mark N. says:

January 2, 2018 at 23:24

There are 300 grain hard cast lead bullets for the .45 as well, and for most smokeless powders, case capacity is not an issue.

Reply



b72512ga says:

January 3, 2018 at 05:38

From everything I've read lately on several web-sites, large caliber heavy bullets aren't as good as the new improved 9mm rounds. If I ever have a chance to go to Alaska, I'll carry my trusty 9mm Shield when I go to pick berries.

Reply



CcityGuy says:

January 3, 2018 at 09:05

No, I am not Jesting and don't call me shirley.....

Reply



Blackie Lawless says:

January 3, 2018 at 18:12

Hahaha! The mighty 9mm. So small, yet so girl...I mean mighty

Reply



ATFAgentBob says:

January 3, 2018 at 07:58

This is why everyone should get an M2 or Mk19 and mount it to their side by side or four wheeler. one round of .50 BMG API or 40mm HEDP would put anything down reliably. Plus with those vehicles' small foot print they could follow the hunter and provide covering fire from charging Grizzlies and other North American predators of any size. In a perfect world we would all be free to match the firepower offered by most Army fire teams sadly we can't so pack a lever gun in 45-70 govt., 500 magnum, 500 nitro, or similar large magnum caliber when out in bear country.

Reply



Pete Ah says:

January 3, 2018 at 08:18

Dumb pricks were out hunting wolves... They deserved to end up bear food. Too bad they didn't try for another couple cans of bear spray.

Reply



Dean Weingarten says:

January 3, 2018 at 09:01

Jake Purlee had a legitimate wolf permit.

Reply



Pete Ah says:

January 3, 2018 at 17:32

A permit may make something legal, but it doesn't make it right. Serve up the grizzly chow!

Reply



freedom1080 says:

January 4, 2018 at 10:51

Legal wolf hunting based on scientific wildlife management.
PS the earth is not flat.



bobnotaub says:

January 3, 2018 at 09:21

Coming from someone actually lives in wolf and griz country (Montana) you are clearly very ignorant on the issue of wolves here. Do some reading and come back to us before you start dishing out insults to people you don't know.

Reply



jwm says:

January 3, 2018 at 10:08

So you believe people engaged in a legal activity deserve death. Would you say you're engaged in a legal activity right now?

Reply



jwm says:

January 3, 2018 at 17:41

You the one wishing death on folk engaged in a legal activity. I'm just establishing the boundaries of the rules you've agreed to play by.

And always remember. You set these boundaries.

Reply



Blackie Lawless says:

January 3, 2018 at 18:15

Wolves suck. Kill 'em all with reckless abandon.

Reply



freedom1080 says:

January 4, 2018 at 10:49

Wolves are worthless vermin pest. There should be a bounty on them. Clearly you're an animal rights wolf lover and not a hunter.

If you hate wildlife and love barren wasteland wolves are great.

If you want to end hunting and let the wolves wipe out the game herds wolves are great.

Reply



Jeh says:

January 4, 2018 at 11:27

My dear ignorant, misguided cityslicker, wolves are vermin.

As they say in these parts, "smoke a pack a day".....

Reply



DrSchmancy says:
January 3, 2018 at 09:23

Or you could simply mind your own business and not invade bear's territory. Nobody dies, peaceful coexistence.

Reply



Blackie Lawless says:
January 3, 2018 at 18:18

We are humans. Everything is OUR territory. The animals are here because we let them.

Reply



freedom1080 says:
January 4, 2018 at 10:58

OMG are you like 6 year old child that get's all their information from cartoons?
FLAME DELETED. It's our territory and the bears need to fear mankind. Time to start hunting them. BTW these bears have come in right around houses cause of FLAME DELETED like you that think animals are more important than people.

Reply



Triad999 says:
January 3, 2018 at 09:52

I lived in Alaska in the 90s, I learned to hunt there. No self respecting Alaskan would ever carry a bear spray or even advise anyone to carry one. I bought a pair of Browning BARs after I got there in .300 Win Mag and .338 and I was the lightest armed guy on every hunt. Every one carried backup as well. .44 mag with "Alaskan Load" rounds, 454 Casull, 12 gage with sabot. On one hunt on Kodiak we were after Sitka Bucks (small sweet tasting deer usually under 100 lbs.) We carried mini 14s for the deer and I had my 454 and an 18" 12 gauge with alternating 00 and sabots in the tube. I was lucky enough to see a couple of the Brownies up fairly close in my time there and luckier still that it didn't result in e defense situation, and I will tell you this ...anyone who thinks a

spray or anything else short of an airstrike will stop an angry bear, especially a sow protecting cubs, is a moron of unbelievable proportions. And more importantly they have probably never seen a wild bear in an unprotected scenario instead of a zoo. They are at once the most frightening and magnificent animals I have ever seen. The first impression you get from is lasting and it includes the feeling that nothing you do could stop them if they wanted you bad enough. Bear spray? ... Bullshit! I'd feel safe with the biggest caliber I could shoot effectively and then still hope I don't have to.

Reply



bobnotaub says:

January 3, 2018 at 10:35

If nothing short of an airstrike would stop an angry bear, why did you spend all that money on those guns? Sounds like a moronic move of unbelievable proportions.

Reply



Montana Guy says:

January 3, 2018 at 10:40

Message: I don't know why they don't make bear spray work like wasp spray...shoot a stream out like a hose, make it out of gel or something so the wind wont catch it so quickly.

Really, good idea, right?

Reply



bobnotaub says:

January 3, 2018 at 10:54

The idea is to create a barrier cloud. That way it doesn't require a large degree of accuracy. And you don't use up your can of bear spray shooting a thick gel/foam hitting everything but the eyes of a running, barking, bear because you're freaking out (understandably). At least with a cloud of the stuff you're far less likely to miss. Unless you have a heavy wind like these guys.

Reply



adverse5 says:

January 3, 2018 at 17:14

Believe me, I would put up a barrier cloud. At least make the bear's eyes water. I have cleared a few rooms with the same trick.

Reply



Richard says:

January 3, 2018 at 11:26

Bear spray and guns will only work if you have a bit of warning. Bear spray will work on a charging bear if properly deployed. A gun shot depends heavily on placement and placement takes time. No round will instantly stop a charging bear unless the spinal cord or brain are hit. Oh, the bear may die but not before a minute or so of mauling takes place. I live in the heart of the largest concentration of grizzlies in the lower 48 and the most dangerous situation is the surprise attack. Too fast and close for bear spray or deploying a gun with good shot placement. I carry both and hope I have enough warning to use what I need. It's safer to pay attention and understand bear behavior than to argue loads, guns etc. Be prepared. The vast majority of bear encounters are resolved peacefully.

Reply



bobnotaub says:

January 3, 2018 at 11:54

Exactly. And the people who actually live and spend a majority of their time in griz country get this. Carry both, learn to use both, learn to read bear sign/behavior. Education on bears will save more people than either guns or sprays.

Reply

Scotty Crawford` says:

January 3, 2018 at 12:47



No one here seems to get to the essential issue with bear spray and grizzlies: It usually works well when sprayed in the face of nosey grizzlies who are not obviously threatening yet, in calm winds, but it does NOT work when you spray it in advance of a charging grizzly...
...because you've created a sort of curtain of spray, and the bear is running faster than a horse, and it goes through the spray-curtain in about three billionths of a second.

A friend of mine asked Alaskan rangers for their opinion before going there, and they recommended a portable horn; the compressed-air, shaving-cream-shaped ones that fans blast at football games. Then he went camping on a glacier with his girlfriend in a tent there, and a female came sniffing around in the night and got more and more aggressive for about ten minutes. When she pushed the side of their tent, he blasted the horn, and she did take off without returning. But that's just one case...

I've strongly criticized Mr. Weingarten's thinking when he ventured out of the areas where he is indeed well-qualified. However, in this case, he has written a much more well-thought-out article, except for making this very important point.

P.S.: Black bears are VERY different. They are 99% vegetarian, and usually just eat carrion for their 1% meat diet. Don't kill 'em because you're just scared of your own shadow. It's immoral and unmanly.

However, as you get farther and farther north in Canada, they do attack people a more and more often. They're also bigger and bigger as you get farther and farther north. In the lower 48, I've personally chased them off dozens of times just by running at them or yelling at them (but I always made damned sure they didn't have my food first; Yes, they will fight you and hurt you bad if you try to take it back.)

Reply



freedom1080 says:

January 4, 2018 at 11:04

P.S.: Black bears are VERY different. They are 99% vegetarian, and usually just eat carrion for their 1% meat diet. Don't kill 'em because you're just scared of your own shadow. It's immoral and unmanly.

Talk about the dumbest comment ever posted 100% BS from a clown. Tons of attacks on people by black bears. 11 year old child was killed by black bear in Utah. SO much for your grossly uneducated worthless comment. Come back after you understand what facts are. Until then stop spreading lies, misinformation, and BS to the public.

Reply



Robert says:

January 4, 2018 at 16:01

Well, black bears MAY run or walk away with the proper encouragement. There was this male about 3 years ago where I work that turned on our ranger and he had to kill it. Bears are the top of the food chain. Sometimes they will leave, and some times they won't.

Best bet, DON'T feed them, DON'T leave your garbage out unprotected; if camping, USE BEAR BAGS and hoist your food, cooking clothes, etc, in them at night, and pitch your tents away from your cooking fires and away from your latrines. — WHY INVITE THEM IN....

If they are not used to people, there is less likelihood of an unwanted encounter.

Hiking in bear country? Make noise, wear bells. If the bear hears you it gives her (and her cubs) time to avoid you.

Reply



Freedom1080 says:

January 5, 2018 at 00:54

Robert thanks for the big city boy advice.

Hilarious. Wear bells make noise look like a fool.

I have been around 100's of black bears not worried

But I carry and I am ready to kill them if they forget

we are at the top of the food chain.



Richard Jones says:

April 9, 2018 at 10:21

61 people killed by bears since 1900. Black bears are omnivores, though mostly eating plants and insects they are known to kill animals as large as elk and moose calves.

Reply

Freedom1080 says:



April 9, 2018 at 11:32

You forgot too mention the over 500 attacks where the people have lived. To claim you know everything about each and every bear out there is great reading. If you like fiction. Black bears are meat eater and most predatory attacks come from black bears. So you just stay in your fairy tale land the rest of us will handle the adult world.



BierceAmbrose says:

January 3, 2018 at 14:06

Bear spray does work better than firearms for people who will never face an actual bear. Your getting eaten bothers them not at all. Different definitions of “works” and “better.”

Reply



Gunr says:

January 3, 2018 at 15:27

Remember the stories about the people, or rather what’s left of them, that are found in the woods, mostly eaten, with a half empty can of bear spray laying at their side.

Reply



Derringer Dave says:

January 3, 2018 at 18:40

Okay, everyone seems to agree that for bear defense, you should use your largest caliber gun, preferably a lever-action 45-70. However, I don’t have a lever-action bigger than .45 Colt, and my other large-caliber guns are single-shot rifles and a double-barreled shotgun.

Question 1: Which is essential, a large caliber, or the capacity to fire more than one or two shots?

Question 2: which of the below guns would be suitable for bear defense? (and don't tell me "buy another gun," because I can't afford to buy any more guns and my gun safe is overflowing!)

I'm ranking them below in what I'm guessing is the order from worst to best:

- a) Single-shot .44 Magnum CVA Scout Takedown rifle with a red dot sight? Reloads are too slow, so assume only 1 shot!
- b) Single shot .454 Casull rifle with a 1-4 scope? Reloads are too slow, so assume only 1 shot!
- c) Lever-action Marlin 1894C that holds 9 rounds of .357 Magnum?
- d) Lever-action Henry Big Boy .45 Colt that holds 10 rounds of .45 Colt?
- e) Double-barreled 12-gauge (two shots plus the possibility of a reload)?

For my 12-gauge, I currently have pepper shells as well as buckshot, because for home defense my first round is a pepper shell (this helps avoid fatal accidents if the unexpected intruder who sets off the burglar alarm turns out to be my brother-in-law, which actually happened one night at 2:00 a.m.!))

This leads to my third question:

Question 3: For a 12-gauge shotgun, which is the best ammo for bear defense: buckshot, slugs, pepper shells, or a combination of them? I know everyone here hates pepper spray, but when I tested my 12-gauge pepper shells they hit the fence 60 feet away, and those were only the 1.75" shells, while the 2.75" shells I now own are even more powerful. If I had pepper shells in the first barrel, the second barrel would have either buckshot or a slug.

Oh, by the way, in my area there are only black bears, no brown bears!

Also, in my area it's illegal to open carry unless you have a hunting license (which I don't have) and it's hunting season, so this is hypothetical, but I'm curious. In my state, someone shot a bear to defend his wife after the bear climbed onto his porch and was trying to break through the glass door into his house, and for this self-defense, he actually got charged with "hunting without a license"!! He replied, "I was in my pajamas. Why would I be hunting in my pajamas?"

(Have you guessed which iron-curtain state I'm in yet? It's the People's Republic of NJ).

Reply



PWinKY says:

January 4, 2018 at 11:06

I'm thinking that either of those lever guns are fine for black bears. Especially with the proper loads. That's what I would pick if I were you. 12 gauge third and weird single shot rifles last.

Reply

ROBERT says:



January 4, 2018 at 15:50

There are some 12Ga. shells that are designed for bear. They are "supposed to" be non-lethal, and send out numerous shards (like thorns). I have no idea how well they work.

Reply



Gunr says:

January 4, 2018 at 17:21

If I had to shoot a charging bear, I wouldn't want to use a "non lethal" load

Reply



Gunr says:

January 4, 2018 at 17:29

You need to do two things!

Get out of N.J., and have a serious talk with your brother in law!

Reply



ROBERT says:

January 4, 2018 at 15:45

A follow-up comment to my earlier remarks:

My .44 Mag. is a S&W handgun. It's for self-defense, not for hunting; however, hunting in bear country with a rifle without my .44 as a backup is not a pleasant thought.

There was a case many years ago in Glacier National Park where the rangers had to kill a grizzly. (I knew one of them personally.) Some unlucky camper had placed several .38 slugs between the bear's eyes. It just made the bear more angry (and probably gave him a bit of a headache.)

Luckily, all I have to contend with is black bears.

P.S. The fences I have to walk are in N.E. Pa. — Hello there, neighbor in N.J.

Reply



ozzallos says:

January 5, 2018 at 02:09

You see, it's obvious most of the people here have never handed a 45-70. Go on. Rock off a few rounds of 400+ grains as fast as you can in a simulated CQC scenario with a furry meat tank. There's no doubt the bullet will do the job, but I have my doubts most of us would be able to handle it.

Hunting? Sure. Defense? *Eeeeeeehhh...*

Stick with either a shotty or pistol caliber in forty flavor.

Reply



James Turner says:

January 5, 2018 at 17:48

I haven't had the opportunity to hunt where bear are a problem, but the set up I carry is a BFR in a 45-70 caliber and I tote a Marlin (older model w/iron sights). That gives me 10 rounds of hand loaded shells to take care of business before I would become concerned about reloading. I don't think I would be overly concerned about bear.

Reply



Left Thumb says:

April 8, 2018 at 21:53

Thank you for the article. I'm moving up to Wyoming so this isn't just a curiosity anymore. Anytime I hear people and news media take very one sided stances i.e. Bear spray is sooo much more effective. Only crazy gun people need guns, I get really skeptical. Thank you for being honest. I think it's a good idea to carry spray and a firearm and know how to use both. Grizzlies are becoming much more common and hunting is opening up on the Grizzlies themselves.

Reply



Richard Jones says:

April 9, 2018 at 10:23

Left Thumb, using an article that documents the complete misuse of bear spray and firearms

to make a judgement is trouble. Showing that three people armed with readily available hunting rifles took more than 7 shots to drop a 400 lb bear at close range does not speak highly of their skill with firearms. With limited info on their deployment of the spray I don't think they were skilled with that either. I live in the middle of the greatest concentration of grizzlies in the lower 48. They are frequently passing through my yard and are commonly seen. We are always aware and both bear spray and firearms are usually carried if venturing very far. The surprise encounter is the most dangerous and the hardest to prepare for. Just carry both and practice using both properly. Be bear aware and enjoy these guys. Chances of a problem are very small but so is getting mugged.

Reply



Freedom1080 says:

April 9, 2018 at 11:25

Richard you can always tell when city boys are running their mouth. No doubt you never killed a bear or have the slightest idea what it takes to put one down. 7 shots can happen if you bother to actual talk to Guides and grizzly bear hunters you would know that fact. To claim they misuse the bear spray is hilarious reading. Bear spray works sometime and other times it's completely worthless.

Reply



Richard Jones says:

April 9, 2018 at 11:45

Well Freedom boy, at least I don't post anonymously. I'm glad you are so familiar with black bears but I'm pretty sure you don't live, as I do, within the heart of grizzly country just outside of Yellowstone. I'm also pretty sure you haven't spent 25 years as a park ranger nor a firearms instructor as I have. And I'll bet the last time you saw a live griz was in a zoo. I see them a dozen plus times a year. My neighbor just saw one in their yard yesterday. I'll match my experience and credibility against your opinions any time. So tell me, do you live daily in bear country? Are you an experienced hunter? Have you personally had a griz encounter in the wild? Have you ever associated daily with professional guides, outfitters and game managers on a daily basis? Have you ever been trained in the use of bear spray? Also, I think your points would be taken better if you refrained from personal attacks and name calling.



Derringer Dave says:

April 9, 2018 at 13:51

A 20-gauge pump-action shotgun loaded with slugs is even better against bears than a 45-70 (judging by Taylor Knockout Factor, TKO, which is a better figure to go by than muzzle energy). In fact, about the only thing better against bears than a 20-gauge shotgun is (obviously) a 12-gauge shotgun (unless you want to tote around a .50 BMG rifle, but I don't think you want to carry a thirty-pound .50 BMG rifle on your hunting trip)!

But if you have a 20-gauge pump, like I do, make sure it's loaded for bear with slugs, not buckshot, because for some unknown reason, 20-gauge buckshot doesn't come in sizes bigger than #2 (and I couldn't find any sizes bigger than #3). Does anybody know why no major ammo makes loads 00 or 000 buckshot in 20 gauge? They make 00 buckshot shells for .410 bore, and if it fits in .410 bore, it would definitely fit in 20-gauge shells, so why don't ammo makers load 0, 00, or 000 buck for 20-gauge?

Reply

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