



Minnesota Herpetological Society

PO Box 130366, Roseville, MN 55113

Peter Strohmeier
Committee Administrator
Minnesota House of Representatives
Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee
Peter.Strohmeier@house.mn

February 28, 2021

Dear Mr. Strohmeier,

The Minnesota Herpetological Society (MHS) represents over 300 members and supports a wide variety of programs aimed at amphibian and reptile education and conservation in Minnesota and beyond. Many of the MHS' members keep native species of snake, lizard, and/or salamander as pets and educational animals. The MHS supports regulations that allow reasonable accommodations for responsible pet ownership (e.g., legally acquired captive bred individuals), while also protecting our native species from ending up in the illegal wildlife trade.

Currently, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) lacks statutory authority to permit the keeping of snakes, lizards, and salamanders for pets. HF 1563 / SF 1445 seeks to create statutory authority for DNR to prescribe conditions and issue permits in accordance with these conditions. The MHS has a good working relationship with DNR and looks forward to working closely with DNR on this topic.

MHS and its members do want to raise one concern with the bill, as drafted. While the bill clearly amends MINN. STAT. 97A.401, which resides within the "Game and Fish" regulations, the plain language of the bill doesn't specifically differentiate between native and exotic species of snakes, lizards, and salamanders. The MHS does not support ambiguous statutory language and opposes regulation of exotic species of snake, lizard, and/or salamanders unless designated under the State's list of prohibited and regulated invasive species. MHS recommends the following three modifications to the bill's language:

Subd. 8. Snakes, lizards, and salamanders. The commissioner must prescribe conditions and may issue permits to breed, propagate, and sell native snakes, lizards, and salamanders. A native snake, lizard, or salamander that is obtained from a permitted breeder or that was possessed before August 1, 2021, may be possessed as a pet unless otherwise prohibited under section 84.0895.

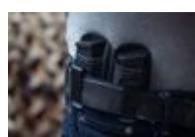
Sincerely,

Laura Windels

Laura Windels
President – Minnesota Herpetological Society
president@mnherpsoc.org

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HUNTING

Federal's FireStick Will Be a Game Changer in the Muzzleloader Hunting World

Many states will allow the FireStick to be used during regular muzzleloader seasons as a way to get more hunters in the field



By Alex Robinson
June 2, 2020



Federal's FireStick comes pre-loaded with either 100 or 120 grains of Hodgdon Triple 8 powder. You still load the bullet through the muzzle just like in standard muzzleloaders. [Alex Robinson](#)

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wave of new people is a polyethylene capsule that's filled with black powder. So ... not exactly space-age technology. While the product itself might not be super advanced tech, the idea behind it is pretty brilliant.

One of the great pains of shooting a muzzleloader is loading it (usually measuring out powder charges) and then cleaning it after every other shot (or sometimes with every shot). For newbies, this process is not only a pain in the neck, it can also be really intimidating. If you don't add the right amount of powder or seat the bullet properly ... bad things can happen.

Federal has solved those problems with the FireStick, which is a capsule that comes pre-loaded with either 100 grains or 120 grains of Hodgdon Triple 8 powder. The FireStick pairs specifically with a new [Traditions Nitrofire](#) muzzleloader. Here's how the system works. First you load a .50 cal muzzleloader bullet through the muzzle of the rifle. Then, you break open the gun and load the FireStick through the specially designed breech of the muzzleloader and then press a standard 209 primer into the FireStick's primer pocket. Snap the gun closed and you're ready to shoot. You can see the process in more detail in the video below.

First Look: Federal FireStick Muzzleloader Ignition System



Advantages

The fact that this is way easier than loading a regular inline muzzleloader is obvious. But, there are a few more nuanced advantages to this system, too. First, it's really easy to unload. Simply pull the FireStick out when you're done hunting and leave the bullet seated.

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up to four hours and then fired it with very little change in ballistics. They also tested it in negative 20 degree temps and high-humidity conditions without seeing detrimental changes in muzzle velocity.

The Nitrofire muzzleloader was designed with an internal bullet shelf so that bullets are seated in the same position every time (which helps with accuracy and safety). This also makes it impossible to load the gun from the rear. The FireStick will only work in the new Nitrofire muzzleloader, you can't fit it into existing muzzleloader models. Likewise, you can't use the Nitrofire with loose traditional powder like standard muzzleloaders.

Lastly, the FireStick system is way cleaner than standard inline muzzleloaders. I got the chance to shoot it at a range day with Federal engineers (more on this in a minute) and we shot 10 rounds before cleaning the barrel—one fouling shot and then three, three-shot groups. There was no decline in accuracy and it didn't become impossible to push the bullets down the barrel. The system is cleaner because the powder is igniting inside the capsule, there's no powder touching the barrel directly. Also, because of the bullet shelf design, that crud ring or powder ring doesn't develop the way it would in standard muzzleloaders. Lastly, there's no breech plug to pull out and soak.

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Accuracy

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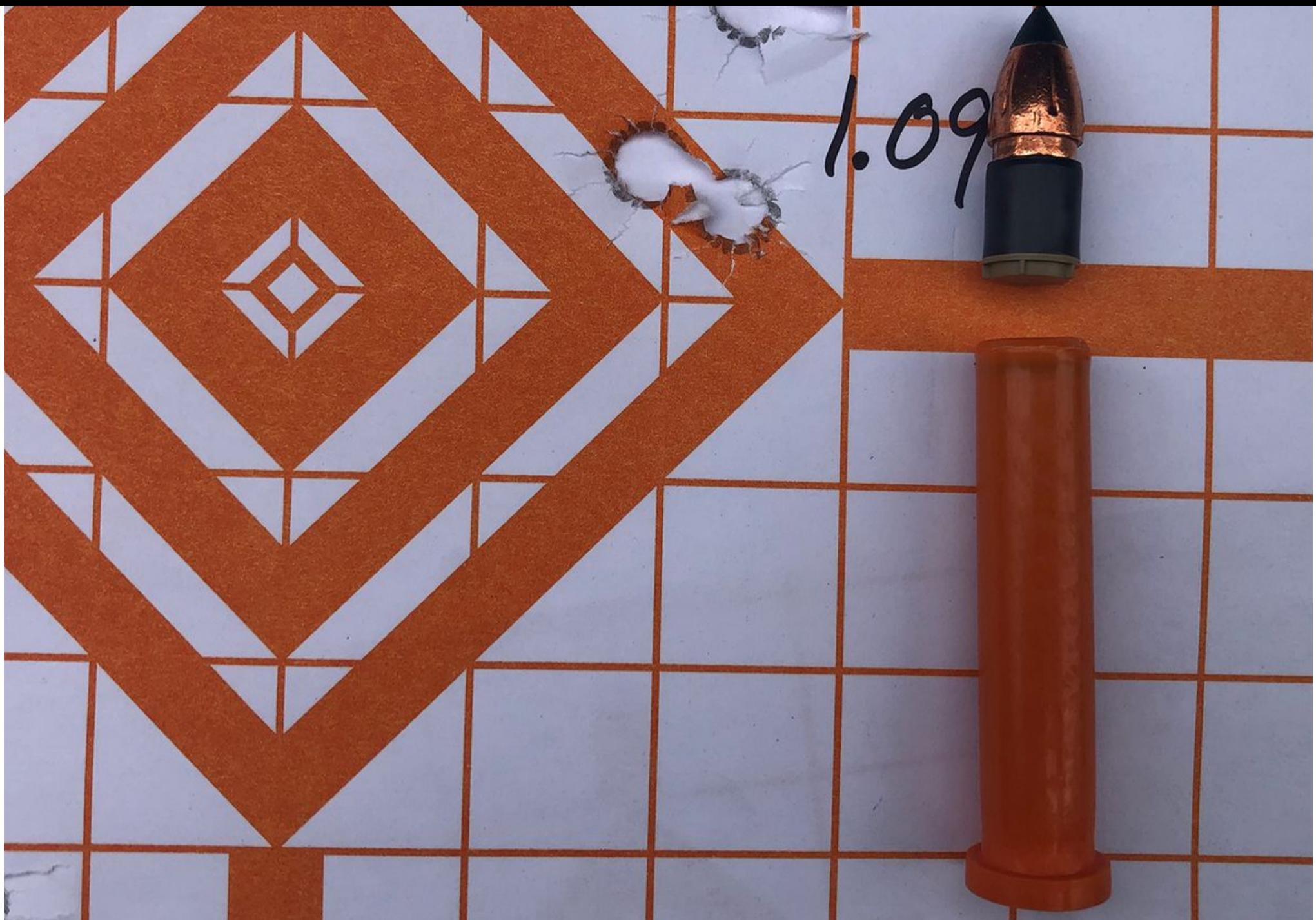
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Expect to see above-average accuracy with the FireStick/Nitrofire combo. *Alex Robinson*

I was shooting a pre-production rifle at the range day with Federal engineers (production models will be ready before fall) so it's too early to make a final statement on the system's accuracy. That said, you should expect to see slightly above-average accuracy from the FireStick and the Nitrofire rifle. At 100 yards, I was shooting about two-inch average groups with Federal's 270-grain Bor Lock Trophy Copper bullets and 1.6-inch average groups with Smackdown Carnivore 305-grain bullets. My best group was 1.09 inches. This is not game-changing accuracy. As you can see when compared to our [muzzleloader test](#) a few years ago, this is on par with how the better bullet/powder/rifle combinations perform. In broader testing, the Federal guys were getting average groups from 3 inches to about 1.6 inches from a wide sampling of name-brand muzzleloader bullets (the system works with all name-brand bullets).

Federal also shared some of its early velocity testing data with me, proving that consistent muzzle velocities were helping with better accuracy. With the Traditions Smackdown Carnivore 250-grain bullet, testing showed a variance of 44 fps and with Federal Premium B.O.R. Lock MZ Trophy Copper 270-grain bullet there was a variance of 37 fps. The muzzleloader industry standard of muzzle velocity variance is 75 fps, according to Federal. In other words, since there is a consistent amount of powder loaded into each capsule, FireStick is turning out very consistent muzzle velocities which in turn helps with accuracy.

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that's turning out ultra-fast velocities (the mean velocities were 1,973 fps for Carnivore and 1,957 fps for BOR Lock).

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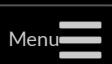
Should It Be Legal?



The advent of the FireStick makes it easier for new hunters to properly load a muzzleloader. *Alex Robinson*

So should this product be allowed in regular muzzleloader seasons? Many game agencies answer loudly and clearly—yes. These agencies see it as a way to bring more hunters in to muzzleloading with a safe product that's easy to use.

"The muzzleloader season is important for mentored hunts because oftentimes the states have more liberal seasons, so you get multiple weekends," says Jon Zinnel, the Conservation & Youth Shooting Sports Program Manager for Federal. Besides that, it's often easier to get mentors on board for a muzzleloader season because they've already been able to hunt for themselves during the archery season and the regular gun season.

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is what helps bring some of those people to the table," Zinnel says.

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There is real potential here too, with an estimated 3.4 million muzzleloader hunters in the U.S., Zinnel says.

He's been working with state game agencies around the country to confirm that the FireStick is legal for hunting within the state—or to bring up a rule change that would legalize the product. He says that by this fall there will be about 30 states that will allow FireStick to be used in hunting seasons.

Ohio is one of the states that decided to tweak the language in its regulations to allow FireStick to be used during deer hunting season. Peter Novotny, the assistant chief of the state's Department of Natural Resources compares it to when the state started allowing inline muzzleloaders to be used decades ago.

Read Next: [The 8 Best Modern Muzzleloaders](#)

"We've been very progressive in allowing muzzleloaders in our state," Novotny says. "As soon as the industry announced [the FireStick], our hunters were asking 'can I use this new system?' It was actually requested by the hunting community to allow it."

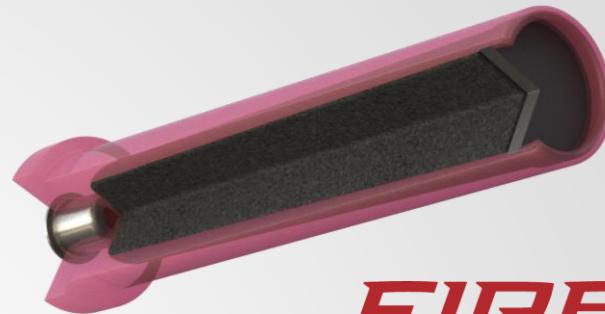
There has been some small opposition from folks who argue the product takes some of the challenge out of muzzleloading. But in reality, the FireStick doesn't actually make the hunting part easier, just the loading and reloading aspect of shooting a muzzleloader.

"We've seen groups who say 'my way is the only right way to do it'" Novotny says. "But when that conversation becomes exclusionary, and creates unnecessary barriers to entry, that's when it's our job to look at it and see if we are really doing our part to serve the whole public and the resource... It should be the individual's freedom to make that choice on what type of hunting implement they want to use—as long as it falls under our safety parameters."

The state has some good recent history to look back on when it comes to allowing new technology into deer seasons. Ohio has allowed crossbows in the regular bow season for more than 30 years, and despite some naysaying from some old-school archers, the state's deer population didn't crash. The state more recently allowed pistol-rifle (or straight-wall) cartridges to be used during the gun season and it was immensely popular among young hunters, Novotny says.

"Ohio has focused more on the resource rather than being exclusionary about the methods of the hunt," he says. "We emphasize safety, we emphasize the resource, and we emphasize fair chase."

It's likely that many other states, at least in whitetail country, will follow Ohio's lead.

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A new muzzleloading propellant/rifle system in conjunction with Federal, Hodgdon Powder and Traditions Firearms to revitalize the Muzzleloading market.

- All-new patented muzzleloading ignition system
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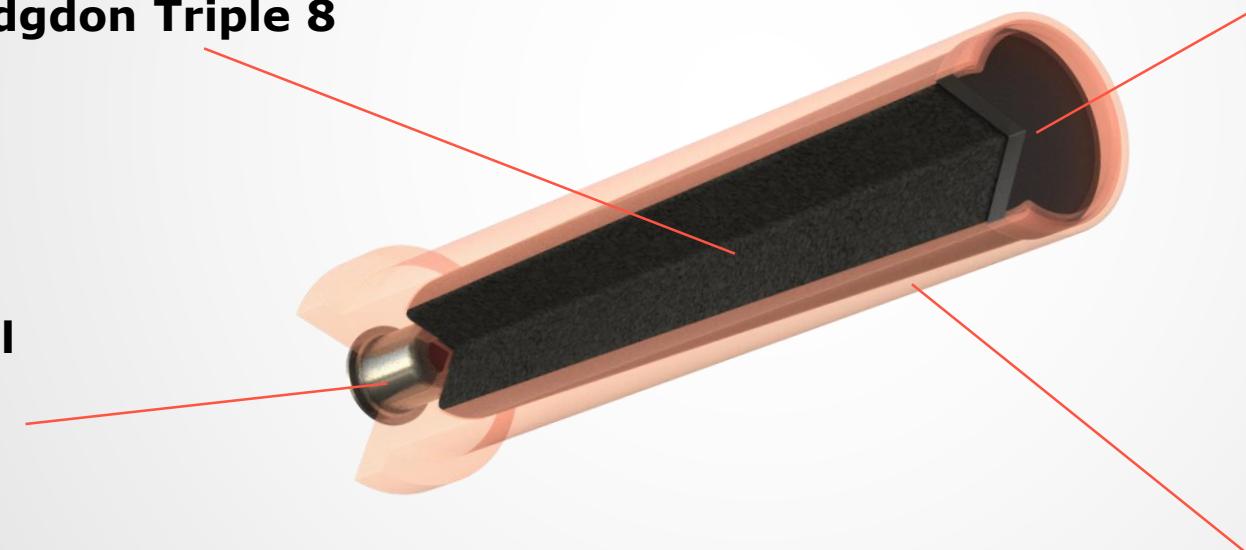


FIRE STICK™ Features

**Black Powder Substitute –
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**209 Shotshell
Primer
inserted by
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**Polymer Pre FireStick designed with
breakable front section**



**Polymer charge dimensions chosen to prevent any dangerous
combinations with existing shotgun gauges**



FIRE STICK™ System Loading Steps:

Like current muzzleloader designs, loading a breech-charging muzzleloader is a multistep process, which includes the following steps:

- (1) Engage the safety;
- (2) Load a bullet/sabot into the muzzle using a ramrod;
- (3) Seat the bullet/sabot firmly on the shelf within the barrel using a ramrod;
- (4) Open the breech by disengaging the barrel release;
- (5) Insert the encapsulated powder charge into the breech end;
- (6) Insert the primer into the encapsulated powder charge; and
- (7) Close the breech.

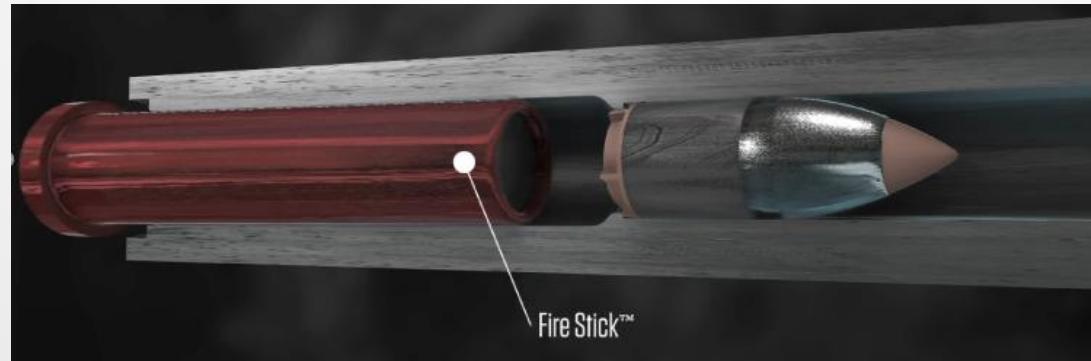


FIRE STICK™ Features

LOADS FROM THE MUZZLE



CHARGES FROM THE BREECH



Polymer charge dimensions chosen to prevent any dangerous combinations with existing shotgun gauges



209 Inline vs FIRE STICK™ system

FIRE STICK
Rifle
Chamber



Inline
Muzzleloader
Chamber





December 12, 2019

Jen Mock Schaeffer
Director of Government Affairs
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
1100 First Street NE, Suite 825
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Jen:

Federal Ammunition, Traditions Firearms and Hodgdon Powder have joined forces to rejuvenate muzzleloader hunting. Our companies will be introducing new products at the 2020 SHOT Show that will honor the time-tested traditions of primitive muzzleloader hunting. Through innovative engineering and design, these new products will make muzzleloader hunting safer, more reliable, and more accessible to current and new generations of hunters.

The purpose of this letter is to inform the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) of these innovations. As this letter will outline, the innovations we are bringing to market will improve safety and reliability and will not alter the spirit of primitive muzzleloader hunting.

Our products were developed to operate within the framework of existing muzzleloader rules and regulations; but we recognize the need to directly engage the public and regulatory bodies to spread awareness and address questions in an open and transparent way. Our goal is not to change the timing or duration of muzzleloading seasons, but instead to connect the industry, regulators, and consumers on these important innovations that support safety and the promotion of our shared hunting heritage.

Technical Overview

While safe and effective when used properly, currently available muzzleloaders have inherent safety and consistency limitations. Inadvertent double charges or ember discharges can lead to catastrophic firearm failure and/or personal injury. Powder can also get mixed, contaminated, substituted, wet, inconsistently compacted or improperly measured, and lead to inconsistent performance, wounded animals, dangerous pressures and/or personal injury. Further, the inability to easily unload a muzzleloader causes some users to climb out of tree stands with loaded firearms, travel with loaded firearms and/or store loaded firearms indoors.

To address these shortcomings, a new breech-charging muzzleloader featuring a “safe” charging system is being introduced to the market. This new muzzleloading propellant/ignition system, known as the FIRE STICK, was developed by Federal Ammunition in conjunction with Hodgdon Powder and Traditions Firearms.

Like current muzzleloaders on the market, the new system requires the bullet/sabot to be manually loaded through the muzzle with a ramrod. Unlike current designs, however, the FIRE STICK allows the user to charge the muzzleloader by inserting a one-time use encapsulated powder charge through the breech. The encapsulated powder charge is a factory manufactured, precision-measured crimped plastic vessel containing a pre-measured quantity of black powder substitute. The black powder substitute is not reloadable and the entire FIRE STICK system is designed and intended for single use.

This design eliminates the risk of double charges, mixed powder and wrong powder, allows the user to safely seat the bullet/sabot against a fixed position for consistent and reliable performance, and allows the user to unload the rifle after an unsuccessful hunt for safe handling, transport and storage.

Like current muzzleloader designs, loading a breech-charging muzzleloader is a multistep process, which includes the following steps:

- (1) Engage the safety;
- (2) Load a bullet/sabot into the muzzle using a ramrod;
- (3) Seat the bullet/sabot firmly on the shelf within the barrel using a ramrod;
- (4) Open the breech by disengaging the barrel release;
- (5) Insert the encapsulated powder charge into the breech end;
- (6) Insert the primer into the encapsulated powder charge; and
- (7) Close the breech.

As demonstrated, high rate of fire and speed of loading are not features of this design. Indeed, the same number of steps are required to load and charge muzzleloaders currently on the market. However, after loading, the breech-charging muzzleloader can be safely unloaded by opening the breech, removing the encapsulated powder charge and pushing the sabot/bullet out of the muzzle through the breech end with the ramrod.

In addition, two design features prevent the user from firing fixed ammunition from the rifle. First, the dimensions of the charging chamber versus the bore will not accommodate any commercially-available fixed ammunition cartridges. Second, the shelf within the barrel has a sub-bore diameter, which makes effectively firing fixed ammunition impossible.

Another added benefit of the new system is that the user can visibly differentiate if the firearm is charged or uncharged, or loaded or unloaded. With current In-line muzzleloaders utilizing a breech plug, this is not possible at a quick glance. Current systems require the breech plug to be physically removed to inspect the firearm in the same way.

Closing

Hunting during Muzzleloader-only season is typically used as a way to spend more time in the field for a rifle or shotgun hunter. However, current muzzleloader offerings have their

frustrations and limitations to the point that the hassle of operating them can be a deterrent and barrier to enter the sport.

With hunting participation flat or declining in many areas, we believe the innovative breech-charging muzzleloader products will attract more hunters and help us to grow and expand our shared heritage and love for hunting. Crucial to the hunting community's acceptance of this new muzzleloader system is the education, awareness, and discussion of current regulations.

We look forward to working with AFWA and other regulatory entities on this important project. Thank you for your consideration. Should you have additional questions, please contact Fred Ferguson with Vista Outdoor at fred.ferguson@vistaoutdoor.com.

Sincerely,



Tom Hall
President and CEO
Traditions Firearms



Jason Vanderbink
President
Federal Ammunition



Steve Kehrwald
President and CEO
Hodgdon Powder