



The (New) .400 and .465 from H&H

Holland & Holland has two new dangerous-game cartridges, their first such introductions in 90 years. The last was the stellar .375 in 1912; now, in response to popular demand, the company is adding a .400 and .465 based on the same case – creating a family of cartridges for those who hunt the biggest and toughest, and demand ‘H&H’ on their cartridge heads as well as their rifles.

Work on the pair was announced around 2002, and it took a couple of years to get them onto the market. Now, the first rifles and ammunition have seen use in Africa, and riflemakers such as Empire Rifles are receiving requests for the new chamberings. So now is an opportune time to take a look at them.

Russell Wilkin, technical director of H&H, was the force behind the concept and design, and he approached it in a methodical, logical way, paying attention to every subtlety of a dangerous-game cartridge. The obvious one is power, but power is easily come by; more difficult is combining power with a case and bullet that feed easily, operate at low pressure, and can function in a standard-sized action.

With their distinct taper, long necks and shoulders, the new H&H .400 and .465 cartridges fit right in with nitro-express cartridges of a century ago. Their form was carefully thought out, to ensure slick feeding and extraction. H&H ammunition is loaded by Wolfgang Romey.

Wilkin's goal was to create a genuine family of cartridges that would complement one another. Since the .375 generates 4,000 foot-pounds of muzzle energy with a 300-grain bullet, he decided a logical step up would be a .400, generating 5,000 ft.lbs. with a 400-grain, and a .465 generating 6,000 ft.lbs. with a 500-grain (actually 480). And, since he expected many clients would own two or three of the calibres, he wanted to give them all roughly the same trajectory out to the practical dangerous-game limit of 200 yards.

The two new cartridges are based on the .375 H&H belted case. Cartridge fads come and go, and we have been in an anti-belt phase for a few years now – the argument being that a rimless case is more accurate. There is no conclusive evidence that this is true; it is certainly not an issue in terms of the accuracy required for a dangerous-game cartridge out to 200 yards, and the belt offers some demonstrable advantages.

First, the cartridge headspaces on the belt rather than the shoulder, allowing a minimal shoulder such as the .375 H&H; this in turn allows a distinct taper, which makes the cartridge feed like butter and extract with no difficulty whatever. The .375 H&H is renowned as one of the slickest-feeding cartridges, and its belt and taper deserve the credit. For the same reason, even in the African heat, cases do not stick in the chamber.

In designing the new .400 and .465, Wilkin has built in a certain amount of symmetry. For example, the .400 has the same energy at 100 yards as the .375 at the muzzle; the .465 has the same energy at 200 yards. In practical terms, it allows a prospective buyer to match his requirements in logical steps.

By today's standards, the ballistic performance of the two seems relatively modest. The 400-grain .400 and the 480-grain .465 each have muzzle velocity of 2375 fps, providing energy of 5,000 and 6,000 ft.lbs. respectively. This puts them in the ballistic neighbourhood of the .416 Rigby on the one hand, and the .500 Nitro Express on the other. There are very few situations that demand more.

Wilkin's new creations deliver benefits other than sheer power. Being built on a slim case, they allow rifles that are trim, yet have sufficient magazine capacity; the slimmer case puts the cartridges closer to the axis of the bore, providing ease of feeding. And, of course, the belt and distinct taper promote easy extraction regardless of heat or pressure.

The necks are long and the shoulders gradual – both features at odds with modern cartridge design, but perfectly in keeping with the tradition of nitro-express cartridges and delivering tangible benefits to the hunter of dangerous game. The long neck grips the bullet securely, and the bullet does not intrude on the powder capacity. This allows the bullet to ease into the bore as pressure builds on its base, rather than popping like a champagne cork.

Russell Wilkin:

The subtle relationship and the ballistics of our expanded family of cartridges is based on pragmatic bullet velocities at typical hunting distances – cut-off @ 200 yds. (Remember, the majority of big game is better hunted at well under half of this distance, with the 'extra' range potential being mostly a matter of theory, 'what-ifs' and 'how-far'...) The cartridges do not require special bullets to withstand very high impact velocities, relying instead on bullet speeds that are achievable in typical length barrels and at 'moderate' chamber pressure, ensuring easy extraction for rapid reloading and avoiding spiteful recoil and the need for ear-splitting, noisy muzzle brakes. 🍷

From left: .400 H&H solid, case, and soft-nose; .465 solid, case, and soft-nose. These are fine additions to the H&H cartridge lineup, and combine with the venerable .375 to form an excellent family of bolt-action dangerous-game cartridges.



Wilkin and the designers at H&H have created two cartridges that are very carefully thought out, calling on the experience of more than a century of riflemaking and cartridge design.

| Cal. | Bullet (grains) | Mv. ft/sec | Bullet energy in ft.lbs - @ yards | | | | |
|------|-----------------|------------|-----------------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| | | | 0 | 50 | 100 | 150 | 200 |
| .465 | 480 | 2375 | 6013 | 5445 | 4905 | 4410 | 3960 |
| .400 | 400 | 2375 | 5011 | 4565 | 4125 | 3735 | 3365 |
| .375 | 300 | 2500 | 4161 | 3800 | 3441 | 3130 | 2820 |

The .400 H&H carries the muzzle energy of the .375 H&H out to 100 yards and the .465 H&H extends that to nearly 200 yards. Similarly, the .465 carries the muzzle energy of the .400 out to 100 yards, and so on.

| Velocity in fps | Muzzle | 50 | 100 | 150 | 200_(yards) | |
|-----------------|-----------|------|------|------|-------------|------|
| .465 | 480 grain | 2375 | 2247 | 2143 | 2031 | 1925 |
| .400 | 400 grain | 2375 | 2253 | 2157 | 2049 | 1947 |
| .375 | 300 grain | 2500 | 2373 | 2275 | 2165 | 2061 |