

The .333 Jeffery

During the early 1900s many companies in the UK developed hunting calibres suitable for African and Asian use, and among these was Jeffery's proprietary .333, introduced around 1911. Also known as the .333 Rimless Nitro Express, this cartridge was designed for Jeffery's bolt-action rifles and became so popular that even the Mauser factory at Oberndorf chambered rifles for it.

Original factory loads launched 250gr bullets at 2500fps, and the heavy 300 grainers at 2200fps, placing it in the same class as the .318 Westley Richards and .350 Rigby. Although it was not intended as an African dangerous game cartridge, many hunters used it on buffalo and even elephant. The .333 Jeffery's heavy-for-calibre 300gr bullet has a very high sectional density factor, thus retains velocity well and penetrates outstandingly. Used with this bullet, the .333 Jeffery was actually a more effective big game calibre than the legendary .318 Westley Richards. Unfortunately the original 250gr bullet for this calibre was a copper-capped hollowpoint which was a little too fragile for its 2500fps velocity. As a result it was not very successful and actually marred the .333's reputation.

With our modern powders it is possible to improve the .333 Jeffery's ballistics and the 250gr bullets can be pushed to almost 2700fps, which places the Jeffery in the same class as the .338 Win Mag. It was, however, the .333 Jeffery's heavier 300gr bullets, along with its mild recoil, that earned it its reputation. At that time, bullets were not constructed as strongly as the modern premium-graders, so the lower impact velocities suited the old bullets better, guaranteeing controlled expansion and deep penetration. No wonder the .333 Jeffery was deemed an excellent all rounder for general bushveld hunting and dangerous game.

Jeffery also brought out a rimmed version of the .333, the .333 Flanged Nitro Express. Intended for double rifles it had virtually the same ballistics as the rimless cartridge, but the .333 Flanged was never very popular and Jeffery discontinued it after the Second World War.

Because of its good reputation and excellent results on large African game, the .333 Jeffery inspired the legendary Elmer Keith to design an American wildcat, the .333 OKH. As you probably know, Elmer was a big-bore-slow-bullet man and the .333 OKH performed very well on elk at moderate ranges. He later used the .300H&H case to develop another .333, the .334 OKH.

The .333 Jeffery was forced into obsolescence when Kynoch stopped manufacturing all ammunition during the 1960s. Africa largely became the domain of the American hunter (who used American calibres almost exclusively, since the proprietary British cartridges were not well known in the USA). Happily, the .333 Jeffery reappeared when Kynamco, the British manufacturer who took over the Kynoch label, began producing factory-loaded ammunition in all the old classic British calibres during the 1990s. The exchange rate, however, makes this ammo very costly for South Africans.

Currently no manufacturer offers production rifles in .333 Jeffery, so those interested in this fine old cartridge will have to go the custom route. In South Africa, Truvelo (011-314-1405) can supply barrels. Any action suitable for .30-06-length cartridges will do for the Jeffery. Other than Kynoch, .333 cases and bullets are obtainable



Fact Sheet – .333 Jeffery						
Standard factory ballistics:						
Bullet	BC (energy)	MV	100yds	200yds	300yds	400yds
250gr	.400	2500 (3469)	2288 (2905)	2087 (2416)	1897 (1996)	–
300gr	.428	2200 (3224)	2016 (2708)	1842 (2260)	1677 (1874)	–
300gr	.419	2200 (3224)	2012 (2697)	1835 (2242)	1667 (1851)	–

Bullet drop chart: Distance in yards; bullet path in inches; ⊕ scope zero distance						
Bullet	50yds	100yds	150yds	200yds	250yds	300yds
250gr	+0.57	+1.11	⊕	-2.93	-7.86	–
300gr	+1.02	+1.58	⊕	-3.92	-10.40	–
300gr	+1.02	+1.58	⊕	-3.94	-10.46	–
–	–	–	–	–	–	–

Reloading information		.333 Jeffery is suitable for	
Bullet diameter:	.333"		impala
Bullet weight range:	250-300gr		kudu
Suitable powders:	S365		eland

Calibre Comparison	.333 Jeffery	8x57 Mauser	.338 Win Mag
Bullet weight	250gr	220gr	250gr
Muzzle velocity	2500fps	2450fps	2700fps
Energy (ft/lbs) 200yds	2260	1960	2648
Bullet drop at 250yds with 150yds zero	-7.86	-8.49	-6.93

from Ken Stewart Gunsmithing Supplies (Pietersburg), and OPM ammunition (Johannesburg) will make the ammo for you. According to my information Woodleigh is the only major manufacturer that supplies .333 bullets (in 250 and 300gr, available at several of our bigger gun shops).

Magnum contributor, Erik Engelbrecht, owns a .333 Jeffery and he speaks very highly of this cartridge but thinks that the core-bonded Stewart and Woodleigh bullets are perhaps a little too heavily constructed for the relatively low velocities of the Jeffery. To ensure good expansion Erik deems it necessary to hit bone with these bullets, even with the 250 grainers. He has shot a number of blue and black wildebeest, as well as gemsbuck, and reports that the .333 Jeffery's penetration is outstanding. On one hunting trip in Namibia his .333 seemed to be more effective on gemsbuck than his hunting partner's .300WSM loaded with 165gr Nosler Accubonds.

Mild-mannered .33 calibres such as the .338-06 and .338 Sabi perform excellently in the bushveld where shooting distances seldom exceed 150m. The .333 Jeffery will perform equally well in the southern African bush on all large antelope species. For the average South African hunter, the high running costs of the .333 Jeffery make this grand old cartridge less desirable than, say, a .338 Win Mag or .338 Sabi, but if you happen to own, or can get, an original pre-war Jeffery or Mauser rifle in this calibre, there is no reason why you should not hunt with it – it will cost you, but you can do it. Then of course, there are those romantic souls looking for something different, who will no doubt find that the classic .333 Jeffery holds a special fascination. It oozes romance from a time long gone by when hunting was a way of life. **m**