

WHERE HAS ALL THE AMMO GONE?



■ By Michael Ware

Ammunition? What's that? It has been so long since I've seen ammo on the shelf, which we're all forgetting what it is. There are some things that aren't often fully understood on the broad subject of ammo so it is high time we shared some thoughts on this subject.

I'm having a ton of customers come in our shop unhappy with two specific entities over the lacking ammo availability. Half of my customers are blaming the ammunition manufacturers and asking why they haven't ramped up production in a time of great need. The fact is ammo makers haven't ever produced this much ammo this quickly in history short of a world war. The production lines are at maximum capacity and even though business management dictates being cautious of adding machines and staff for temporary demands, most makers have added all they can.

What I don't think folks fully grasp are the huge stockpiles of ammo that simply don't exist at the moment. Instead of distributor warehouses all over America being chocked full with billions of rounds of ammunition coupled with a hundred thousand out on display at the storefronts with more in the back room, it has simply been bought up. Thus, when pallets of ammo show up at distributors and are broken down and trickled out to the 80,000+ retailers across America, there simply doesn't appear to be much at any given place even though as a nation we're pumping out more than ever. In short, the surge pile at the retail locations is gone, so when the huge amounts of ammo are being distributed out all over, there is very little at any one place at any one time.

The other half of my customers are concerned over how much ammo agencies like Department of Homeland Security have been buying. Many assume Uncle Sam is consuming all of the ammo. The recent purchase order from DHS for 1.6 Billion rounds of ammo dwarfs my stash, but that

isn't a drip in the bucket compared to what our ammo companies can put out for the nation's consumers to buy annually. Also, I suspect it convenient for ammo makers and retailers to tell their customers that production is often shifted to meet military orders, as you and I will rarely remain miffed long if we know soldiers in Afghanistan are getting the M855 ammo they need. While some folks have the best of intentions with the manner in which they are conveying that sentiment, it is often a bit misleading and perpetuates the notion Uncle Sam is buying up all the good stuff.

According to ATF, five years ago there were nearly 300,000,000 weapons in the U.S. As of 2012 we've added 85,000,000+ weapons to that sum. If you add up Military, Law Enforcement, and Agency firearms, the United States is setting on nearly 400,000,000 weapons. Military, LE, and Agencies only represent about 5,000,000 of those weapons. Clearly the citizens of this great country are in the driver's seat when it comes to buying trends.

I estimate it taking a year or so before pricing and availability are back to what most consider normal. The phantom orders in the system are a large part of the problem. Every retailer location in the U.S. has a million rounds of ammo on order, so the production facilities are slammed. However, when the

distributors call up and say "Hey, remember that order for 1,000,000 rounds of 556NATO you ordered? It's ready to ship..." most retailers will recoil with horror and ask that only 50,000 ship out. Thus, the back orders will get solved quickly at that point. The same will be the case with weapons in terms of supply coupled with the filling of ludicrous quantities many retailers have ordered, as they have no intention of buying all the weapons they have placed on order.

When asked what I suggest, I'm telling folks to grab the Ol' 870 off the rack, snag some 7 1/2 shot and use it. Practice, training, sharing time with your kids, etc. can all be achieved in large part with the 12 gauge shotgun. Granted, it isn't a fix for every type of shooting, but the shells are usually available and the costs are pretty close to pre-panic pricing.

Too often in my life, I've had disposable income and found the items I was looking for, but didn't buy. In times like this we reflect a little and look at those decisions differently. This goes to show you that the grocery store won't always have ice melt a hundred pallets deep for you when the ice storm hits. The same goes for firearms industry. When you have the money, and want to put a little extra away for a rainy day, I'd recommend doing so in the future. 🍀



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