SUPER SINGLES

RUGER’S NEW SUPER BLACKHAWKS

DANGEROUS GAME ARs

ROCK RIVER
ALEXANDER ARMS
NEMO
DPMS
SOUTH OF THE BORDER

The Aguila Story

Mexico’s largest ammunition manufacturer offers a wide selection of loads and some of the most innovative products available today.

BRAD FITZPATRICK
Just south of the urban center of Mexico City, Mexico, lays Cuernavaca, the capital of the state of Morales. Prior to the arrival of Europeans in Central America, Aztec rulers made their home in Cuernavaca during the warm summer months, and the region is home to some of the most valuable and important artifacts of Aztec history in all of Mexico. Today, the city, with its towering cathedral, aquifers, abundant gardens and tropical climate is still a favorite vacation spot for residents of Mexico City seeking to escape the cramped metropolis.

Cuernavaca is also home to Mexico’s largest ammunition company, Aguila. And, as the brand has expanded into the U.S. market and started appearing more and more frequently on store shelves, there are a growing number of American shooters who are becoming fans of the brand. There is a general belief, though, that Aguila is a new company, and that’s not true. In fact, Aguila began producing ammunition in the 1960s in Cuernavaca, taking over operations at what had once been the Remington facility in town. When Remington pulled up stakes and moved out of Cuernavaca they left behind the goods needed to produce ammo, and that’s where Aguila stepped in. Today the brand has upgraded their facilities to utilize modern equipment and currently employs 1,200 people in the Cuernavaca facility.

One of the items that remained after Remington’s departure was a shot tower, and under Aguila’s supervision, production of shot resumed in Cuernavaca. Shot towers function by heating lead into a molten state and dropping the liquid lead through a copper sieve high in the tower. Surface tension causes the lead to form into a sphere, and the lead falls into a water bath at the bottom of the tower and cools. Sieves with holes of varying diameters produce different sized shot, and after the shot is cooled, it is checked for dimension and roundness. If a pellet is out-of-round or incorrectly sized, the lead can be re-melted and reformed. There are few operational shot towers in existence in the world, and the Aguila tower is the only one in Mexico.

With a shot tower in place it’s little surprise that Aguila makes so much shotgun ammunition, and in fact, the company produces the bulk of the sporting, upland and big game shotgun ammunition in Mexico. But a growing number of American shooters, impressed with the price and quality of Aguila’s new competition and upland loads, have become converts to the brand. Aguila offers field loads in .410, 20, 16 and 12 gauge, and they also offer buckshot loads. For 16-gauge lovers, and there are a lot of them out there, Aguila has offered a means by which shooters could obtain hunting ammunition at a reasonable cost. The company also offers 12-gauge competition loads for trap, skeet and sporting clays as well.

**Rimfire and Centerfire Offerings**

It’s quite possible that your first experience with Aguila ammunition came during the recent drought of rimfire ammunition. When .22 cartridges became hard to find, shooters started looking for new options, and Aguila was perfectly poised to give shooters what they needed. In fact, Aguila is one of the world’s largest manufacturers of rimfire ammunition.

[1] Aguila’s Minishell lead shot loads function in double shotguns and provide a low-recoil practice option that’s ideal for new and experienced shooters alike. This eliminates the need to buy beginners a sub-gauge gun. [2] The Colibri is a one-of-a-kind powderless .22 cartridge. The bullet is propelled down the barrel by the energy generated by the primer, making it ideal for dispatching pests in rimfire revolvers. [3] The Minishell slug has prompted shooters to reexamine the way we think about self-defense shotguns. This 1¾-inch shell is much more manageable to shoot from 12-gauge double guns than even light 2¾-inch slugs, yet it packs an impressive punch for its size.

A box of 20 Minishells doesn’t look like your average box of 12 gauge shells, but they are handy and convenient and fit easily in a pack. Headed on a backcountry upland hunt in the desert? Bring along a box of #8 minishells to dispatch venomous snakes around camp.
ammo and a good portion of that rimfire fodder makes its way into the United States. Cheap, affordable and surprisingly accurate rimfire ammo made Aguila a lot of friends north of the Rio Grande, and it seems those shooters have repaid the company by remaining loyal customers after the worst of the rimfire shortage had passed.

The aforementioned upgrades to the Cuernavaca facility have helped improve Aguila’s reputation among serious competition shooters, too. Modern Aguila rimfire ammo is clean burning and extremely uniform, and in accuracy tests with both handguns and rifles, I found that the company’s Match ammunition lived up to its billing, producing tight groups and very consistent velocities. But one of the hallmarks of the brand is its variety; Aguila offers inexpensive target loads, high-velocity .22 shorts and nickel-plated .22 loads for the smoothest operation and .22 hollow point loads perfect for pest control.

Aguila compliments its rimfire loads with an ever-expanding line of centerfire pistol and rifle cartridges. On the rifle side, the list is still fairly short—there’s a .30 carbine load and .223 and 7.62x51 offerings. The handgun lineup is much larger, though, with 27 different loads in everything from .25 Auto up to .45 Colt. There’s defensive ammunition, but there’s also a lineup of affordable target ammunition. And since most shooters fire several times as many target rounds as defensive loads each year, it’s nice
to have another company offering affordable factory options.

**Aguila Exclusive Products**

There are a lot of ammunition manufacturers, but Aguila offers two products that set them apart from all of the competition. A few years ago, the company decided to do something radical to traditional shotgun shell design. Instead of playing with shot size, wad design, coatings and so forth, Aguila took the bold step of giving its shotgun shell a frontal lobotomy, whacking a full inch off the standard 2¾-inch shell. The result was a one-of-a-kind product known as the Minishell.

As you might imagine, shooters and gun writers took note. The Minishell was viewed alternatively as a gimmick or the most innovative product to hit the shotshell market in decades. But the Minishell did prove to have its place, and it has become Aguila’s flagship product. But is it functional?

Certainly. One of the primary drawbacks of shotguns is that recoil can be difficult to manage, especially for new shooters. The Minishell changed all of that thanks to its 1¾-inch length, 1¾-dram equivalent powder load and 5/8 ounce shot charge. These loads function in double guns just fine and produce far less recoil and muzzle blast than even the lightest 12-gauge target loads. The advantage? You can have low-recoil practice that is perfect for new and experienced shooters without having to switch to a smaller gauge gun. Additionally, the Minishell buckshot and slug loads offer defensive rounds that produce far less recoil and muzzle blast than typical 12-gauge loads.

Another of Aguila’s most innovative products is the Colibri, the world’s only powderless .22 load. The Colibri looks much like a standard .22 LR round, but it has a smaller, lead 20-grain bullet. Inside, the Colibri lacks gunpowder, which means that the bullet is propelled strictly by the primer itself. It was primarily designed to operate in .22 revolvers, and the primary function is pest control. The Colibri produces very little noise, no recoil and packs enough power to kill rats and other vermin at close range. It’s also a quiet, recoiless training round for those who are new to shooting.

Once a relatively unknown brand to American shooters, Aguila is gaining a strong presence in the U.S. thanks to its low-cost, reliable ammunition and innovative products like the Colibri and Minishell. As ammunition costs rise and availability becomes limited, Aguila will serve a more important role for domestic shooters. Whether you’re looking for low-cost practice ammo, defensive loads or pest control rounds, Aguila has something for you.