

# Journal

PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL MUZZLE LOADING RIFLE ASSOCIATION'S BIG GAME RECORDS PROGRAM

## New 'Flash' Powder for Flintlocks

by Al Raychard

I admit I have never been much of a flintlock shooter. Even before in-lines came along and took over the muzzle-loader industry in the early 1980s and percussion sidelocks and flintlocks were the standard of the day, percussion rifles were my personal choice. The percussion had a faster ignition time, and because it uses a standard Number 11 cap over a nipple to ignite the main charge, which forms a comparatively weather-tight priming mechanism, I feel that percussion rifles are more reliable, especially when hunting under adverse weather conditions.

Today, in-lines drive the muzzleloader market and the percentage of hunters carrying flintlock rifles afield each fall is very small. These guns definitely had their day in the sun, and they served shooters and hunters well for over two hundred years.

In fact, there remains a fraternity of shooters and hunters who are dedicated to flintlock muzzleloaders, and they may be interested in learning that a new black powder priming substitute is just now hitting the market – especially because black powder in all granulations is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain. Since 9/11 new regulations concerning the shipment, handling, and storing of black powder have been put into place and fewer retail outlets are carrying the stuff. Because of black powder's scarcity on store shelves this new priming substitute just might be the answer flintlock enthusiasts have been looking for.

The product is called BlackMag Flash and is being produced by BlackMag Industries (BMI) at their new facility in Colebrook, New Hampshire. These are the same people pro-



*The new "Flash" powder from BlackMag Industries is BlackMag XP powder regranulated for specific use as a priming powder in flintlock muzzleloaders. The powder will be formerly introduced at the 2010 SHOT Show in Las Vegas.*

ducing the increasingly popular BlackMag XP substitute. To my knowledge, Flash is the first and only commercially available priming substitute for flintlocks on the market.

Several things got me thinking that flintlock users might be interested in the stuff. One is the fact that Flash is basically BlackMag XP powder. I have some experience with BlackMag XP, and it is the only propellant I have used since I first tried it a few years ago. Black Mag XP is ascorbic-acid based, has none of the corrosive ingredients in some other substitutes, is non-fouling, and burns super clean, allowing multiple shots before requir-

ing patching or cleaning. It has other attributes, and it is the best substitute I have ever used in a muzzleloader.

Flintlock users will appreciate the fact that BlackMag XP is non-hygroscopic, which means it does not draw moisture. Because it is moisture resistant it can be damp or wet, and because of its lower ignition temperature, it will still perform on demand.

Just after the muzzleloader season in my state ended I obtained some Flash from BMI and got my old flintlock down from the wall, dusted it off, cleaned it up, and gave Flash a try. Though my flintlock expertise has always been limited, and it has been

years since I even fired a flintlock, I was impressed with its performance.

First, I tried dry firing Flash with just in the pan, with no main charge or projectile in the barrel, to see how it worked. Ignition was instantaneous. I repeated this test a few more times with the same results, and the powder residue in the pan was practically nonexistent.

I then loaded 70 grains of BlackMag XP down the barrel, a patch and .495 round ball, primed the pan with Flash and fired the load. The powder in the pan and the main charge ignited reliably.

Over a series of several shot strings I continued to use Flash for priming, but experimented with several other substitutes and black powder as the main charge. Goex FFFg ignited easily and showed no perceptible lag in ignition. Pyrodex RS ignited as well, but one shot was slightly slower, and Triple 7 showed considerable lag time, although it should be noted Triple 7 is not recommended for use in flintlocks to begin with.

In the end, the combination of standard BlackMagXP as the main charge and Flash in the pan appeared to work the best, although the lag time when using FFFg in the breech was hardly any different. The difference in lag time with Pyrodex and Triple 7 as main charge might be due to the size of the touch hole in my barrel, which is .061", and faster ignition using these products might be achieved in locks with large touch holes.

There was one other thing I wanted to know. My lock is equipped with a black English flint. How would Flash and these various propellants work with the cut agate that is often used in Thompson/Center flintlocks? Changing to agate, I repeated the testing with all the propellants but continued to use Flash for priming. Bottom line? None of the propellants, even BlackMagXP, produced the same, consistent ignition as the flint, although BlackMag XP and FFFg blackpowder fared far better than Pyrodex and Triple 7.

BMI says "Flash" should not be used in the bore as the main charge. *It is used as a priming powder only.* Flash seems to hold great promise and if I were a flintlock enthusiast I'm sure I would use it.


For more information contact BlackMag Industries by telephoning (603) 237-4515; or visit their web site at [www.blackmagllc.com](http://www.blackmagllc.com).

### United Airlines to carry horns and antlers

Back in early December you may have heard or read something about United Airlines' new policy of not accepting horns and antlers as checked baggage. Apparently, United adopted the policy in part due to the damage the tips caused to other baggage.

In response to that policy change, various outdoor organizations encouraged their members, hunters in general, and the outdoor media to contact the carrier and communicate their dissatisfaction and state that other hunter-friendly airlines would be used. It seems United received sufficient feedback and will again transport horns and antlers as checked baggage.

In a letter to the Professional Outdoor Media Association (POMA), United states, "Soon, we will begin accepting antlers and animal horns as checked baggage again." United will soon publish new requirements about the cleaning and packaging of antlers and horns to ensure safe, clean transport. The guidelines will also provide information on the size of antlers and horns that will be accepted, based on the type of aircraft used, and special handling fees.

This is good news for today's traveling hunters. United is a major carrier that provides air service around the world, but this serves as a reminder of how important it is for hunters to check with air carriers concerning the transport of antlers, horns, and meat. Most airlines post their requirements and pertinent information on their web site. If not, contact them directly by telephone. It is vital hunters know what is required and follow the rules to the letter and plan accordingly. 

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