



Blackhorn 209 is a Nitrocellulose Based Propellant

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When it was introduced in 2007-2008, Blackhorn 209 was hailed as the ultimate black powder substitute. Just what everyone had been waiting for: Easy loading shot after shot, no swabbing between shots, very little fouling and rapid cleanup. It was almost too good to be true.

Everyone who shot this powder raved about its accuracy. There is no denying that if you shoot loose powder and want the option of firing multiple times without swabbing; Blackhorn 209 is a good propellant.

However, one thing puzzled a lot of folks. The folks at Western recommended a nitro-solvent for cleaning, rather than soap and water. If this was a "conventional" black powder sub, why was a nitro-solvent recommended for cleaning? The answer was there all along, but ignored by everyone: Blackhorn 209 is a nitrocellulose base propellant! Which helps explain why it shoots so consistently and why swabbing is not required between shots.

Western Powders has succeeded in producing a nitrocellulose base propellant in a configuration and formulation that allows for volumetric measurement of loads without running the risk of high pressure. For that, they deserve credit and accolades from muzzleloader shooters.

We can only assume that Western's reasons for not labeling Blackhorn 209 as a nitrocellulose base propellant is the fact that most shooters associate nitrocellulose with smokeless powder and only the Savage 10ML is strong enough for smokeless powders. Mr. Phair, President of Western Powders, states (email 10/1/2010) that nitrocellulose as an ingredient in Blackhorn 209 does not make it a smokeless powder. Since the US DOT has not classified Blackhorn as smokeless and Mr. Phair states that Blackhorn 209 is not smokeless, I guess we have to take their word for it? We personally do not care how Blackhorn 209 is classified. We would just like to see a more complete labeling of the product. Shooters and hunters are intelligent folks and are not confused when they are presented with the facts. Which is all we ever asked for.

Western no longer makes the claim that their propellant is non-corrosive, and recommends cleaning, as you would with any rifle after shooting. I would concur with that recommendation, as the potassium nitrate and sulfur can combine during ignition to form potassium sulfate and possibly sulfur trioxide which readily combine with water in air to form sulfuric acid.

With a price of about \$30 for a 10 ounce can, it is pretty pricey stuff. Having said the preceding, Blackhorn is a satisfactory powder for most inline muzzleloaders that use a 209 primer.