

KEY SPECS



MAKER: Weihrauch, Germany,
www.weihrauch-sport.de
UK DISTRIBUTOR: Hull Cartridge,
www.hullcartridge.co.uk
PRICE: £620
MODEL: HW 44
TYPE: Magazine-fed sidelever
PCP pistol
CALIBRE: .177 (tested) and .22
MAGAZINE: 10-shot drum
OVERALL LENGTH: 337mm
BARREL LENGTH: 247mm
WEIGHT: 1.3kg (unscoped)
TRIGGER: Two-stage adjustable
SAFETY: Manual, resettable
POWER: 5.6ft/lb

THE GUN TEST PRESTIGE PLINKER

A high-quality fast-fire pistol sounds like a gun with niche appeal, but the airgun community has gone mad for Weihrauch's new HW 44. Mat Manning takes the fist-sized PCP onto the range

Few could have imagined the rapid success of the Weihrauch HW 44 when it was launched earlier this year. There was no obvious demand for a pre-charged pistol, especially one with a not-insignificant £620 price tag, yet shooters haven't stopped raving about the German gunmaker's new fistful of fun. And judging by the feedback from UK distributor Hull Cartridge, the HW 44 isn't just generating a lot of talk, it's also drumming up a lot of sales.

SERIOUS PEDIGREE

Part of the secret to the HW 44's success can be attributed to the fact that it has been born out of decades of airgun evolution. Weihrauch is already renowned for making great pistols and the HW 100 series air rifles are among the finest multi-shot PCPs in the world. The HW 44 is based on the action of the acclaimed HW 110 pre-charged rifle – combine that with Weihrauch's pistol pedigree and deserved reputation for German engineering excellence, and it's clear to see that the latest offering could shape up to be something special.

A passing glance will leave you in no doubt regarding the HW 44's origins – it looks very much like the HW 110 around the cylinder and action. But the HW 44 is a great pistol in its own right, and boasts some very impressive features all of its own.

CONSTRUCTION AND FEATURES

As with the HW 110, much of the HW 44's chassis is constructed from ballistic polymer. This hi-tech material is being used more and more in firearms production, so it's certainly capable of standing up to the comparatively mild stresses and strains placed on it by an air rifle or pistol. It doesn't feel in the least bit flimsy and really complements the styling of Weihrauch's new pistol.

The HW 44's frame incorporates two Picatinny-style accessory rails. The bottom one would lend itself well to a laser for fast-fire shooting, and the top one is perfectly positioned for scope-mounting. Weihrauch actually produces a 2x20 long-eye relief scope that's purpose-made for pistol use. At £120, it's an investment that's worth considering if you want to extract the HW 44's full accuracy potential.



NOTABLE FEATURES



Sidelever
A fully reversible sidelever system cycles the magazine and cocks the action. Smooth and reliable, it makes for great rapid-fire shooting



Optional scope
Designed specifically for pistol use, Weihrauch's 2x20 long-eye relief scope is a great way exploit the HW 44's impressive accuracy potential to the full



Adjustable for windage and elevation, the simple post-and-notch open sights front and rear lend themselves brilliantly to fast-fire plinking – so if you don't want to invest in a scope, you can still achieve decent accuracy

Two Picatinny-type rails provide plenty of clamping space for accessories. The top one is positioned for scope attachment, while the bottom is well-placed for a laser

The wide, flat trigger blade is coupled with a well-engineered two-stage action. Let-off is crisp and very predictable

Moulded, ambidextrous grips are sculpted to hug the contours of your hand. The result is a comfortable hold for left- or right-handers

“EVEN UNLEASHING FREEHAND SHOTS AT SPEED, I WAS STILL ABLE TO CONSISTENTLY TOPPLE TINS”

You don't have to splash out on a scope, though, as the HW 44 comes with open sights that feature a post-and-notch aiming element. They're screw-adjustable for windage and elevation, and I have to say that I've been surprised by how accurately I've been able to shoot with them.

This pistol is a PCP, and you refill its stubby cylinder by pushing the quick-fill probe into the inlet at the front after removing the simple friction-fit plug, which does a great job of shielding the internals from dust and grit. A self-regulating valve makes for very consistent performance, with power levels just below the 6ft lb legal limit for pistols.

The .177 calibre test gun churned out around 100 shots from a 200 bar fill, and Weihrauch says you can expect



Weihrauch's purpose-made silencer fits the HW 44 seamlessly. Fastening via two small grub screws, it hushes muzzle report effectively

around 125 if you opt for the .22 calibre – that's impressive from such a small cylinder.

Monitoring air reserves is a simple matter of taking a quick glance at the clearly-marked gauge at the front of the cylinder. Keep the dial in the green and you should be good to go. I have a bit of a bugbear with guns that necessitate peering down from the dangerous end to see the gauge, but it's difficult to see where else it could be incorporated in this pistol's overall configuration.

FIRING CYCLE AND TRIGGER
Just like the HW 110, the HW 44 boasts a multi-shot firing system that's based on a 10-shot drum magazine – and you get two supplied

with the gun. Weihrauch's tried-and-tested magazine design might look basic, but it works very well. It's easy to reload and it doesn't seem to suffer misalignment or jam-ups, regardless of how much stick you give it during fast-fire sessions.

To remove the magazine, pull the sidelever all the way back, push up and hold the retaining lever just below it, and pull the mag out from the left while pushing it from the right. When the magazine is out, hold it with the smoothest side of the drum facing away from you and load the pellets nose-first. When the magazine is full, push the retaining lever back up and slot it back in. The retaining lever should drop back into position when the magazine is correctly seated. Push the sidelever forwards, and the pistol is loaded, cocked and ready to shoot.

The system is driven by a sidelever, which can be swapped to the other side of the gun for left-handers. Cycling the lever cocks the gun and indexes the magazine, quickly setting you up for another shot. It's a very reliable mechanism overall, and makes for great rapid-fire action on the plinking range.

If you want to hush the muzzle report right down to stop your garden practice sessions from annoying the neighbours, Weihrauch produces a neat and effective moderator for the

HW 44. It retails for £65 and does an admirable job of keeping it quiet.

The HW 44 is much more than a simple backyard plinker, though – and that's more than apparent in the quality of its two-stage trigger mechanism. It is adjustable, but Weihrauch advises against tinkering with it unless you really know what you're doing. Fortunately, the trigger on the test gun was brilliant straight from the box. The first stage has just the right amount of travel before it comes to a clear stop, then breaks cleanly and predictably.

The manual safety catch is ambidextrous, with levers on both sides of the action. The pistol is safe when it's pushed down and in the forward position, and you nudge it up and back when you're ready to shoot.

PERFORMANCE
Pick up the HW 44 and it feels like a solidly built pistol. Weighing in at around 1.3 kilos without a scope fitted, it's weighty and robust, without being too heavy. At about 34cm long, it's by no means a compact pistol but it feels extremely good in the hand. Its

point of balance tips a little towards the front, which I liked when it came to ragging targets on the range.

Handling is further enhanced by the moulded grips, which are sculpted to cradle the contours of your hand. Although ambidextrous, they are a very good fit and should suit most people. I've got very large hands, and although the bottom of my palm does extend beyond the shelf, it still makes for a perfectly comfortable hold.

Most of my test sessions were carried out without the scope fitted as I think pistols are more fun to shoot with open sights, and I wanted to get an understanding of what can be expected from the basic package. I'm not particularly au fait with pistol shooting or open

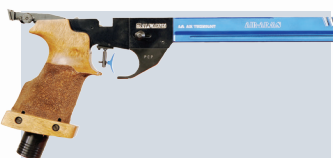


A clearly marked gauge at the front of the HW 44's stubby cylinder provides an indication of remaining air reserves

sights, but that should give even more of an impression of what the average punter can do with this Weihrauch.

And it turns out that your average shooter should be able to put in a pretty solid performance. Shooting from a rested position at 12 metres, I was quickly able to knock out five-shot groups that could be covered by a 5p piece – thanks in no small part to the crisp trigger and the recoilless action. Shooting freehand, my grouping became rather less neat, but the action became a lot more fun – especially with the sidelever enabling me to quickly blast through a whole magazine. Even unleashing freehand shots at speed, I was still able to consistently topple tins and nail knockdown targets out to around 15 metres. Exciting stuff!

ALSO CONSIDER...



AIR ARMS ALFA
£696 www.air-arms.co.uk
This competition-standard pistol is a regulated PCP, and the air reservoir within its walnut grip is good for 80 shots.



STEYR EVO 10
£1,499 www.steyr-uk.co.uk
Top-end match pistols don't come cheap, but this one is ready for serious competition. It boasts a choice of 13 different grip styles.



ZORAKI HP-01
£277 www.highlandoutdoors.co.uk
A more affordable option, this multi-stroke pneumatic pistol requires no charging gear and offers a choice of power levels.

THE AIRGUN SHOOTER VERDICT										OVERALL SCORE
LOOK & FEEL	STOCK	BUILD QUALITY	SIGHTS	COCKING	LOADING	TRIGGER	HANDLING	ACCURACY	VALUE	
8	8	9	8	9	9	9	8	9	7	84