

KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

Russ Douglas examines the quartet of pistols that makes up the Weihrauch HW45 range



Despite having limited experience with the HW45 pistol – particularly across all four of the main variants – I do own a .177 HW75 SSP (single-stroke pneumatic) pistol. Its recoilless accuracy at 10 metres is almost on par (at least in my untrained hands) with my Baikal IZH-46M. Like the HW75, the HW45 is loosely based on the Colt Government / 1911 .45 ACP centrefire pistol, although it's scaled up to accommodate the spring-powered airgun mechanism. This makes it slightly bulky, which for many users is part of the appeal – alongside its very impressive power potential.

I requested the pistols in .177 calibre, as this is my preferred option for target shooting. Smaller pellets travel at higher speeds, cutting cleaner holes in targets for easier scoring. When shooting at longer distances – such as when a shoulder stock is fitted – I tend to use heavier, domed pellets to reduce the effect of wind.

One useful feature of the HW45 is its ability to be cocked to either a half- or full-power level. Opening the action to 90 degrees or 130 degrees provides two different power settings, making it more versatile and reducing cocking effort when shooting at shorter ranges. This can also help reduce fatigue over longer sessions. Don't assume the half-cock mode is underpowered either – as my chronograph results showed, it still delivers significant performance.

There is a definite, audible ratcheting sound as you open the upper section. Unfortunately, the underside of the upper portion that you press against while cocking is not especially ergonomic. The lower frame is made of steel and the upper of alloy, both immaculately anodised. The HW45 measures 272mm in length, and the Star variants 279mm. Weights range from 1145g (2.5lb) for the HW45 to 1174g (2.6lb) for

the Silver Star – making them a satisfying size to hold.

Visually, the HW45 and HW75 are quite similar, though the HW45 now comes in four attractive finishes, and now includes two synthetic Picatinny rails. The new upper rail has nine slots (116mm / 4.5in) and mounts over castellated edges on the existing dovetail rail, secured by two 2.5mm countersunk Allen screws. The under-muzzle four-slot (52mm) rail fits underneath the forend in the same way, fixed by two Allen screws (2.5mm and 2mm) onto a new 44mm x 11.5mm dovetail. The combined weight of both of these rails with screws is a mere 19g, which is negligible in use in my opinion.



The Weihrauch HW45 range comprises the HW45 (left); the HW45 Black Star; the HW45 Silver Star; and the HW45 Bronze Star (above)

The open sights consist of a fully adjustable square-notch rear sight with a U-shaped green fibre-optic rod, and a fixed front blade with a red fibre-optic element. While highly visible in daylight, the upper Picatinny rail obstructs the front sight, rendering it unusable if fitted.

To remove the upper rail, simply slide it backwards by a few millimetres, then lift the front edge as it moves forwards. It's a snug fit — I used a rubber mallet to gently release three of the four units that were tightly secured. Removal reveals the new proprietary castellated dovetail mount. Although the manual lists it as an 11mm dovetail, I measured the upper rail at exactly 12mm, possibly to suit this revised system.

The standard HW45 most closely resembles a scaled-up Colt 1911, featuring angled rectangular grips with classic wooden panels and diamond-pattern chequering, secured with slotted screws. The Star variants have wider laminated wooden grips with flared bases that fill the hand nicely. I preferred these for single-handed 10m shooting, while the slimmer grip of the base model felt more natural for two-handed use.

OPERATION

To operate the pistol, begin by switching the ambidextrous safety to "S" (covering the red dot).

Thumb back the faux hammer to unlatch the upper, which opens slightly, hinging forward. While with break-barrel pistols I would usually recommend loading immediately after opening. Here, I prefer to cock first, then partially close the action, then insert a pellet into the rear of the barrel before closing the upper section with care — ensuring hands and clothing are clear of any moving parts.

The trigger is 9.5mm wide and comfortably curved. I measured the pull at 3lbs on the HW45 and 2.5lbs on the Bronze Star. It has a smooth action with no noticeable creep. The recoil is quite pronounced, enough that my trigger gauge was affected by the movement, so I estimated the pull weight visually after initial attempts. However, the accuracy didn't seem compromised once I adjusted to the firing cycle.

Unlike some spring-powered airguns, the HW45 can be dry-fired. The manual recommends simply firing to de-cock the pistol, with no specific warning against doing so without a pellet. After a few practice sessions, there was a faint smell of oil combustion, but not as much as the smoke from older springers like my Tempest or Hurricane. One of the review units, a Black Star, arrived in .22 calibre and emitted slightly more dieseling than its .177 counterparts.

During testing, I had the chance to get some input from family member Davin. At 15, Davin is tall and lean, and while he was able to cock the Bronze Star (his favourite), it did take some effort. After a few shots, I took over cocking duties so he could concentrate on aiming at the small spinners around six metres away. He preferred the louder impact of pellets hitting steel at full power, which I was more than happy to accommodate.

For cocking from a standing position, I pressed the muzzle against a padded table surface and pushed both halves down and apart to cock under control. From a seated position, I preferred to cock the pistol over my thigh, gripping with the right hand and levering the upper frame away with the left, using my thigh muscle as a cushion. I also experimented with a reverse motion, pulling the halves apart against my chest, but this technique definitely requires thick clothing to avoid bruising.

PERFORMANCE

I chronographed all four HW45 pistols on both half- and full-cock power levels, with both my standard 7.0gr RWS Basics wadcutters, and 8.64gr H&N FTT roundhead pellets. The figures are the averages from five shots, with the extreme spread also included here in brackets.

Pistol	Pellet	Half-cock	Full-cock
HW45	RWS Basic 7.0gr	477fps (13) / 3.5ft/lb	582fps (12) / 5.3ft/lb
	H&N FTT 8.64gr	-	506fps (10) / 4.9ft/lb
HW45 Black Star .22in	RWS Hobby 11.9gr	344fps (8) / 3.11ft/lb	466fps (5) / 5.8ft/lb
	-	-	-
HW45 Silver Star	RWS Basic 7.0gr	462fps (15) / 3.3ft/lb	597fps (7) / 5.5ft/lb
	H&N FTT 8.64gr	425fps (10) / 3.5ft/lb	521fps (4) / 5.2ft/lb
HW45 Bronze Star	RWS Basic 7.0gr	473fps (15) / 3.5ft/lb	574fps (6) / 5.1ft/lb
	H&N FTT 8.64gr	-	499fps (17) / 4.8ft/lb

For reference, I also chronographed two of my older spring pistols and my SSP HW75. Here I again averaged over five shots with wadcutter pellets, though with the two Webleys I first fired off a dozen or so shots to settle the mechanisms, as they haven't been used recently. As you'll notice from the results (in particular the larger spread), these spring pistols might be due a service.

Pistol	Pellet	Velocity
.177" Webley Tempest	7.0gr RWS Basics	339fps (42) / 1.8ft/lb
.22" Webley Hurricane	11.9gr RWS Hobby	191fps (79) / 1.8ft/lb
.177" HW75 SSP	7.0gr RWS Basics	379fps (5) / 2.2ft/lb



The HW45 and HW45 Bronze Star fitted with Hirdhawks shoulder stocks, the JackalHowl red dot sight from CV Life (top) and Frenzy red dot sight from Vector Optics (bottom)

TRIGGER TIME

I set up a 10m target indoors to compare the “traditional” HW45 grip with the chunkier semi-target grips of the Black, Silver and Bronze Star HW45 variants. I started with the HW45, leaning back against the doorway owing to my mobility issues, then sat down to shoot the Star variants after I noticed I was getting a bit wobbly during sighting-in. My initial grouping with the HW45 wasn’t great at 10m (95mm / 4in spread), but my groups with the Bronze and Silver Stars were noticeably better at 59mm and 53mm (the Black 10m NSRA bull is 60mm in diameter). I’m confident all groups would improve with more practice, although I found the generously shaped grips of the Star pistols suited me better. My first group with the .22 Black Star was level but slightly right of centre. After adjusting the sights to the left and switching to half-cock, I shot a tidy 2in group, albeit four inches high. I’m puzzled as to why the reduced recoil made me shoot high.

ACCESSORIES

With all these options, what more could you need? Once I knew the pistols were on their way, I contacted Hirdhawks, who kindly lent me two stocks compatible with the HW45 and Star variants. To fit the former, you remove the grip plates, slide the open end over the butt and then re-fit the grip plates using the longer brass screws supplied. The extra 4mm width of the mounting plate on each side helps the grip feel chunkier, though it felt odd at first against the wrist. The Star stock plate attaches to the heel of the pistol butt using two extended Allen screws. With the stocks in place, I re-fitted the Picatinny

rails and tested the pistols with two red dot sights, the Frenzy Plus 1x22x32 multi-reticle and the CV Life JackalHowl. With these fitted, my 20m downrange groups were within the 2in black 10m pistol target bull, once I remembered to adopt a forward “artillery hold” (as these are recoiling pistols). Again, these group sizes should shrink with practice.

One omission I’d love to see across the entire Weihrauch pistol range is a recessed threaded muzzle. Although neither pistol would have space for a moderator once cocked beyond 90 degrees, the HW45 range is quieter than

my HW75. During testing, I was reminded that only my two Webley springer pistols have a great safety feature: their safety won’t engage unless the pistol is cocked.

I thoroughly enjoyed my introduction to the HW45, so much so that I’m seriously considering whether I can justify buying one and returning three. I’d love to review the new HW75 now, as I’ve heard it can be moderated. ■

With thanks to all at Hull Cartridge (the official UK importers for Weihrauch airguns) and Martin Hird at Hirdhawks for their assistance with this article



The under-muzzle four-slot Picatinny rail measures 52mm

KIT SOURCED

Weihrauch HW45 (£315.60); **Weihrauch HW45 Black Star** (£332.40); **Weihrauch HW45 Silver Star** (£355); **Weihrauch HW45 Bronze Star** (£390), all from weihrauch.co.uk; hullcartridge.co.uk
HW45 stocks (£139.99) hirdhawks.com

HW45

BLACK STAR

**FULL
POWER**
5.5ft.lbs



NEW

UPPER & LOWER PICATINNY RAIL - Ideal for mounting a red dot sight, increasing accuracy and enabling faster target acquisition.

**Fully Adjustable 2-Stage
Match Trigger**

**Ambidextrous
Laminate Grip**

**Ambidextrous
Safety**

**Fibre Optic
Front Sight**

**Fully Adjustable
Rear Sight**



HW45 Walnut

The iconic HW45 is one of the most powerful spring piston air pistols on the UK market. Featuring two power levels cock to 90° for around 3 ft.lbs or crank the lever all the way over for around 5.5 ft.lbs.

Also available: **Bronze Star** and **Silver Star**
Calibres .177 and .22

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