



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on July 10, 2024

Ammunition Vending Machines Hitting Rural Grocery Stores

In a groundbreaking development, Texas-based company American Rounds has introduced vending machines to sell ammunition in stores across three states. This initiative enables customers to purchase bullets alongside their groceries, providing unparalleled convenience for gun owners and marking a significant shift in the retail ammunition industry. The innovation, however, raises serious privacy and data security concerns.

Revolutionizing Convenience

American Rounds has strategically placed its Automated Ammo Retail Machines (AARMs) to offer a round-the-clock purchasing option for consumers, ensuring that ammunition is available whenever needed. "Our automated ammo dispensers are accessible 24/7, ensuring that you can buy ammunition on your own schedule, free from the constraints of store hours and long lines," states the company [on its website](#). American Rounds likens them to ATMs, designed to facilitate smooth transactions and getting customers back to their day in minutes.

Advanced Security Measures

Noting that "Security is paramount for American Rounds," the company describes its dispensers as "state-of-the-art" systems that utilize advanced identification scanners, artificial intelligence (AI), and facial recognition software to verify the purchaser's age and identity. "The machine does a 92-point facial recognition, which I'm told is higher than the TSA's," [said](#) CEO Grant Magers.

"The whole experience takes a minute and a half once you are familiar with the machine," he told [The Associated Press](#). Magers added that this technology ensures transactions are as secure — "or even more secure" — than those conducted online or in traditional retail stores, which don't always require age verification, or where there is a risk of shoplifting.

The vending machines, weighing up to 2,000 pounds, are "well-secured from theft," [according](#) to Magers. Unlike the popular Redbox kiosks, AARMs are only installed inside stores and are never placed outdoors.

Federal law mandates that individuals must be 18 to buy shotgun and rifle ammunition, and 21 for handgun ammunition. The machines require purchasers to be at least 21, using a driver's license scan



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and facial recognition used to confirm identity. "At that point, you can complete your transaction of your product and you're off and going," Magers explained.

Anti-gun Criticism

The introduction of the AARMs has sparked controversy, according to the AP report. Anti-gun advocates worry that selling bullets through vending machines could lead to more shootings. Nick Suplina, senior vice president for law and policy at Everytown for Gun Safety, told AP, "Innovations that make ammunition sales more secure via facial recognition, age verification, and the tracking of serial sales are promising safety measures that belong in gun stores, not in the place where you buy your kids milk. In a country awash in guns and ammo, where guns are the leading cause of deaths for kids, we don't need to further normalize the sale and promotion of these products."

Is That Criticism Valid?

This criticism does not hold water. While the latest data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) does show that firearm injuries were the leading cause of death in children in 2022, it also shows that such injuries predominantly affect black children and teenagers, being the leading cause of death for at least two decades. Interestingly, these children reside mainly in urban areas with stringent gun control laws. These experience a higher volume of gun-related incidents overall.

It is also worth noting that estimates suggest the vast majority of gun crimes are committed with illegally obtained guns, while legally owned firearms are involved in only about 10-15 percent of gun violence. In addition to that, over 2.5 million Americans use guns for self-defense, while 68 percent of those convicted of crimes while in possession of a firearm were already felons, according to studies quoted by [Legal Reader](#).

Magers responded to these concerns by highlighting the company's commitment to responsible gun ownership. "We are very pro-Second Amendment, but we are for responsible gun ownership, and we hope we're improving the environment for the community," he told AP. He also noted that the company's age-verification technology ensures compliance with all federal and local regulations.

Rural Communities

The strategy behind placing these machines in grocery stores is partly driven by the needs of rural communities, where access to ammunition retailers can be limited. "Someone in that community might have to drive an hour or an hour and a half to get supplied if they want to go hunting, for instance," Magers explained. The dispensers are located in Super C Mart and Fresh Value grocery stores in small cities like Pell City, Alabama, and Noble, Oklahoma. These locations serve communities where local retailers that sell ammunition are sparse, making the dispensers a convenient solution for many.

American Rounds has already installed one machine in Alabama, four in Oklahoma, and one in Texas, with plans for additional machines in Texas and Colorado in the coming weeks. The company plans to expand the network further, driven by demand from both consumers and retailers looking to offer a broader range of products to their customers. Magers told the news outlet [Quartz](#) that the company has "over 200 store requests for AARM units covering approximately 9 states currently, and that number is growing daily."

Customers can use these vending machines to purchase rounds for shotguns, rifles, and handguns.

Privacy and Data Security Concerns

While the American Rounds' automated ammunition dispensers offer convenience, they also necessitate



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a comprehensive approach to privacy and data security.

For example, the biometric data collected is significantly detailed, raising concerns about how this sensitive information is stored and protected. Questions also arise about how long the data, such as facial scans and ID information, is retained.

The driver's license scan for age verification means that personal information, including name, address, and date of birth, is collected. Certainly, this information needs robust protection against unauthorized access, as there is potential for misuse or sharing with third parties without the user's explicit consent.

While the machines are secured from theft due to their weight, heavier focus should be on protecting the collected data. These measures could include encryption, secure data storage, and regular audits. However, American Rounds does not address these concerns on its website.



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