Notes from the Lab: .25-06 Remington

The .25-06 was a popular wildcat developed by A.O. Niedner around 1920, which was simply the .30-06 case necked to accept .257-inch bullets. The problem was that most powders from that era were too fast burning to allow the cartridge to reach its full potential. After World War II Hodgdon H-4831 appeared in surplus form and became readily available to handloaders, which significantly improved its ballistic potential and popularity. In 1969 Remington introduced the .25-06 Remington commercially for its Model 700 rifle. Its popularity is reflected in the fact that practically every major U.S. rifle manufacturer, as well as countless foreign makers, offer rifles so chambered. It has proven an excellent choice for deer sized game, while producing a flat trajectory and modest recoil.

Current Remington factory loads are advertised to push a 100-grain bullet to 3,230 fps, or a 120-grain to 2,990 fps (from a 24-inch test barrel). In chronographing these loads in an Interarms Mark X rifle with a 24-inch barrel, velocities were 3,188 fps and 2,958 fps, respectively. In developing the accompanying data those velocities were matched with several powders, and sometimes easily surpassed.

Using the 100-grain Hornady SP bullet, impressive velocities were achieved with Hodgdon Hybrid 100V, Alliant Reloder 17, Alliant Power Pro 4000-MR, IMR-4007ssc and Winchester Supreme 780, all of which easily yielded speeds greater than factory loads while staying within maximum pressure guidelines.

Switching to 117- and 120-grain bullets, all of the above powders again turned in topnotch velocities; however, Accurate AAC-4350, IMR-4831, IMR-7828ssc, Reloder 22 and Reloder 25 and Hodgdon H-4831 can also be included.

Varmint shooters should take special note of the 75-grain Hornady V-Max bullet, which easily reached speeds of 3,600 to 3,700 fps, yielded exceptional accuracy, offered a .290 ballistic coefficient and would be utterly devastating to coyotes and other varmints.