

Notes From the Lab: 7mm Remington Magnum

Introduced in 1962 with the Remington Model 700 bolt action rifle, the 7mm Remington Magnum became widely popular almost overnight. Due to its high velocity and flat trajectory, it has proven an excellent choice for hunting in open country, offering enough muscle to take elk and moose cleanly. Remington created its 7mm magnum by necking the belted .264/.338 Winchester Magnum case to accept .284-inch bullets.

Several labs report wide velocity variations from rifle to rifle and from test barrels. In handloading the cartridge for more than 30 years and firing thousands of rounds across chronographs from many different rifles, I have likewise occasionally seen 300- to 400-fps velocity swings from gun to gun with the same loads. In developing the accompanying data, a Ruger Model 77 MKII All-Weather with 24-inch barrel was chosen. This rifle has given velocities using factory loads that are close to advertised figures and is a good representation of what should be expected. Nonetheless, using a chronograph is suggested when developing handloads.

When loading Hornady 139-grain bullets, the GMX gave the highest velocity and pressure when pushed with identical powder charges, and all listed velocities were obtained with that bullet. Nonetheless, increasing powder charges with conventional lead core bullets is not suggested.

Powder capacity varies from one case manufacturer to another, with Winchester being used in all testing. If Remington or Federal cases are used, capacity is usually decreased and maximum loads with compressed charges may require a 1- to 2-grain reduction to get bullets to seat properly.