

# V for Varmint



## Pete Moore checks out some of Norma's 50-grain 223 Remington ammo with fox busting and maybe muntjac in mind

**T**he 223 Remington is a truly great calibre, OK 22-250 Rem and 220 Swift are more powerful, but for a short/light fox and now small deer (muntjac and Chinese water deer) cartridge, the 223 is my choice. So with the change in the hunting law for England and Wales regarding the use of 22 centrefires on the aforementioned smaller deer species, I thought I would start looking at what's available in this calibre and up first is Norma's 50-grain load.

### Little Doubt

There's little doubt that Norma makes some good ammunition and this example is aimed more at the varmint shooter as it uses Hornady's 50-grain V-MAX bullet. For our needs this is more a fox load, as the V-MAX is highly frangible by design, so would do a lot of meat damage to a muntjac if you dropped it behind the shoulder. However, if you are confident enough for head and neck shots then it will drop them in their tracks, as that little ballistic tipped projectile goes off like a bomb when it hits!

Build consistency was good and pulling a random cross section showed an average bullet weight of 49.85-grains. Powder looked to be one of the Swedish

**Norma's 50-grain V-MAX 223 Remington load, fast and flat and - in the right rifle - highly effective too...**

**Detail of the Hornady V-MAX bullet, for muntjac and CWDI this load is better suited to head and neck shots as it really grinds up the meat on body shots...**

Bofors range and weighed dead on at 24-grains.

### Nearer the numbers

Testing was done with my Mauser M 03, which has a 20, 1-10 twist barrel, which was a personnel choice, but maybe a bit short. Over the Tim Hannam Pro-Chrono chronograph it was averaging 3292 fps/1203 ft/lbs with an extreme spread of 32 fps. Norma quotes an average speed of 3494 fps, obviously they must use a longer barrel so I put some through my friend's Remy 700 custom 223, which has a 23" barrel and that gave an average speed of 3407 fps/1288 ft/lbs.

Accuracy-wise the Norma was shooting good 1/2" groups through the Mauser at 100 yards, which was most pleasing. However, the Remington 700 was not so keen on it, which I put down to the fact of its faster rifling twist, which suits heavier bullets. I would imagine that this 50-grain load would shoot equally as well, if not better from the standard 1-12" pitch still used by the US industry as a benchmark.

Out of interest I also ran it through my SGC Speedmaster AR15, which has a 20" 1-8 twist barrel. Here velocity and energy rose to 3355 fps/1247 ft/lbs. But as expected accuracy was not so good due to the faster rifling.

Brass is Boxer-primed and eminently reloadable and the ammo comes in packets of 20-rounds in a polystyrene inner. Overall an effective load from a tried and tested manufacturer and given the quality; the price is a steal when compared to similar brands.... Though I would say that thought needs to be given to your rifling twist rate to see if it suits this light bullet.

<b>Norma 223 Rem #15739</b>
■ Bullet: 50-grain Hornady V-MAX
■ Average speed/energy: 3407 fps/1288 ft/lbs (23" barrel)
■ Price per 20 £14.90 inc. VAT
■ Contact: RUAG Ammotec UK Ltd, 01579-362319 (for your nearest stockist)

