

Remington XR-100 Rangemaster

By John Haviland



The XR-100's thumbhole stock certainly looks different from the grip on a standard stock.

Remington's new XR-100 Rangemaster rifle is a blend of the old and the new. The single-shot rifle is based on the Remington XP-100 pistol action, which dates back to the early 1960s. However, the XR-100's action has been extensively upgraded, which makes the rifle easy to use and very accurate, as proven during several days at the rifle range and in the field.

Remington introduced the XP-100 handgun 40-some years ago and soon after that the Model 600 carbine-sized rifle. Both of them were based on the same action. The action had a bolt handle that turned forward to keep it out of the way of the trigger hand on rifles chambered for hard-recoiling cartridges. The handle had only a slight

knob to grasp while working the bolt, and along with the crooked handle made working the bolt awkward. The XP-100/600 action also had its bolt release hidden inside the rear of the left raceway. It required three hands and a long, thin screwdriver to push the release and remove the bolt. The plastic blind floor plate and trigger guard gave the action a cheesy look.

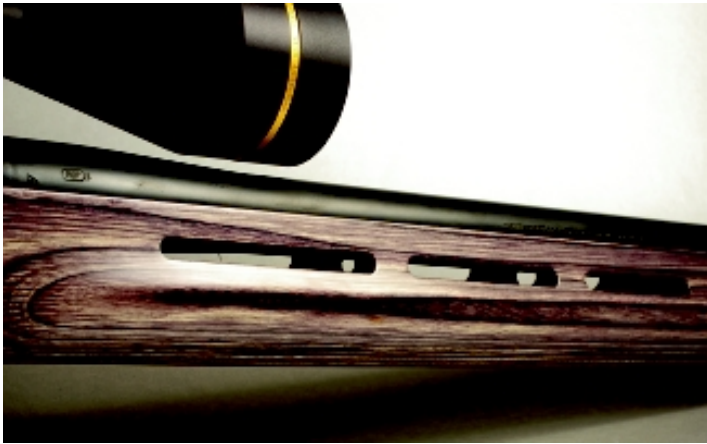
Still, the XP-100/600 had most all the features of the more expensive Model 700, in a much shorter package. Its nearly 1-inch shorter length compared with the short action Remington Model 700 was a result of eliminating much of the length of its bridge and tang. The XP100/600's bridge was so short that it could accommodate only



Bob Pfenning shot the Remington XR-100 single-shot rifle mounted with a Leupold 4.5-14x50mm scope.

one scope base mounting hole. The trigger assembly was squeezed in right behind the magazine so there was no room to fit the Model 700-style bolt release in the top of the trigger guard. Even though it has a short overall length, the Model XP-100/600 ejection port is actually a third of an inch longer than the one on the Model 700 short action.

The new XR-100 action is about a quarter of an inch longer than its forerunner. In fact, John Trull, Remington's firearms marketing manager, said the XR-100 is based on the Model Seven receiver. This, thank goodness, is to incorporate the easy-to-operate Model 700 bolt release. The XR-100 is a single-shot rifle, so there is no cut in the bot-



The slots cut in the stock below the barrel give the XR-100 a racy look ... and help dissipate heat.



The Varmint Hunter's reticle in the Leupold 4.5-14x50mm scope works when the scope is set on 14x.

tom of the receiver for a magazine well. The XR-100's bolt handle wears a nice swept-back look and sticks out from the stock enough to easily grab it. A full knob on the handle is nicely checkered on the top and bottom.

Remington says the XR-100 is its first production gun to come equipped with an externally adjustable Model 40-X trigger. The trigger weight adjustment screw is located inside the top of the trigger guard in front of the bolt release button. Right out of the box, the rifle's trigger pull was 2½ pounds. Remington says the trigger can be adjusted between 1½ and 3½ pounds. The trigger on the XR-100 I used adjusted to as light as 2 pounds and as heavy as 4½ pounds. With the trigger set at 2 pounds, the pull varied only a couple of ounces. At any weight setting, creep and overtravel were nonexistent.

The XR-100 is a heavy rifle. The Remington catalog lists its weight at 9 pounds, 2 ounces.

The majority of that weight is the

rifle's barrel, which tapers only slightly over its 26-inch length to 0.83 inch at the muzzle. The gray laminated thumbhole stock adds another 3 pounds, 3 ounces to the rifle's weight.

The stock's looks and configuration certainly are unusual. The lines of the veneer layers give the stock an appealing look, especially the long streaks of black to light gray where the stock was cut to shape. The rings look especially attractive in the large hollow for the thumbhole on the right side of the butt. The three cuts on both sides of the fore-end through the barrel channel give the stock a racy look and act as vents to dissipate barrel heat. The beavertail fore-end measures slightly more than 2 inches in width and supports the rifle solidly on a sandbag or rifle rest. Because the gun is a single-shot, the bottom of the stock has no cut for a floor plate. An aluminum trigger guard is held in place with a screw at the rear that attaches to the receiver tang and another at the front that at-

taches to the trigger.

The shape of the thumbhole stock is perplexing because about the only way to carry the rifle is with your thumb through the hole behind the grip and other hand around the fore-end. The grip terminates in a teardrop-shape, and also bends to the left. The rollover cheekpiece wears all the grace of a club. But the wide and flat comb it provides supports the face well. Once on a rest, though, the thumbhole grip is comfortable in the hand and the wide comb makes the rifle very comfortable to aim. Factor in the beavertail fore-end and the rifle is rock steady on a rest. The stock's dimensions are: length of pull, 13½ inches; drop at comb, 1¼ inches; and drop at heel, 2⅜ inches.

I mounted a Leupold VX-III 4.5-14x50mm scope to the rifle, held in Leupold steel STD two-piece bases and high rings. That brought the rifle's weight up to 11 pounds, 8 ounces.

LOADING AND SHOOTING THE XR-100



Hornady reloading dies were used to load the author's .204 Ruger cartridges.

The XR-100 I shot was chambered in .204 Ruger. The rifle also is chambered in .223 and .22-250 Remington.

The three factory loads I shot included Hornady's loads with the 32- and 40-grain V-Max bullets and Winchester's Super-X loaded with a 34-grain hollow-point bullet. Hornady developed the .204 and it shows because its two loads are difficult to beat for velocity and accuracy. Both loads shot a five-shot group under $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch at 100 yards. The velocity of the two bullet weights was at least a hundred feet per second faster than any of my handloads. The Winchester factory load didn't shoot quite as accurately. Its bullet velocity also was somewhat slower than the stated 4,025 fps. Several friends who shoot .204s noted bullet velocity was on the slow side across the board for the XR-100.

Ever since I first shot the .204 during the summer of 2004 I've been partial to the Hornady load with the 32-

grain V-Max bullet. With a rifle sighted to place the little red-tipped bullet 0.75 of an inch above where the cross hairs rest at 100 yards, I could aim pretty much right on vertically out to nearly 300 yards and hit a prairie dog. That is, if the wind was calm and I held steady. The 32-grain bullet also generated so little recoil that I saw the impact of most of the bullets I fired. That is an immense help in correcting for a miss caused by bullet drop or wind drift.

While I was fiddling with the Varmint Hunter's Reticle in the Leupold 4.5-14x scope on the rifle, I shot three-shot groups at 100, 200, and 300 yards with the Hornady 32-grain V-Max load. They measured:

- * 0.926 inch at 100 yards.
- * 2.355 inches at 200 yards.
- * 1.759 inches at 300 yards.

Handloads did improve the accuracy of the XR-100. However, the step up over Hornady factory loads in accuracy was only a few tenths of an inch



Pro-Shot cleaning equipment kept the XR-100 clean throughout the tests.

at 100 yards. The day I shot most of the loads at the range, a strong, 20-plus mile per hour tail wind blew. The wind blew pretty much straight from the rifle to the target, so it probably failed to affect group sizes all that much.

Components for handloads included the Hornady 32- and 40-grain V-Max bullets, Sierra 32-grain and 39-grain BlitzKing bullets with Hodgdon Benchmark, IMR-4895, and VihtaVouri N135 powder. All the bullets shot at least one very tight group with one of the powders.

I noticed while sighting-in the rifle and in general shooting holes in paper targets that the rifle started to go off its feed after about 20 shots. So when it came time to shoot for accuracy, I cleaned the bore of the rifle with two patches wet with Pro-Shot 1 Step Gun Cleaner & Lubricant, followed by two dry patches, then one fouling shot. I shot four, five-shot groups, then cleaned the bore again and let the bar-

Shooting Results

Remington XR-100

.204 Ruger, 26" barrel, Leupold 4.5-14x50mm scope

Bullet	Powder/Weight	Av. Velocity	5-Shot Group (100 yds)
Hornady 32-gr. V-Max Factory Load		4,038	0.740"
Hornady 32-gr. V-Max 2.253" OAL	Benchmark/28.0	3,865	1.017"
	Vit. N135/27.0	3,901	1.583"
	IMR4895/28.5	3,658	1.070"
Sierra 32-gr. BlitzKing 2.237" OAL	Benchmark/28.0	3,865	0.759"
	Vit. N135/27.0	3,911	0.674"
	IMR4895/28.5	3,667	0.905"
Win. Super-X 34-gr. HP Factory Load		3,748	1.314"
Sierra 39-gr. BlitzKing 2.246" OAL	Benchmark/25.5	3,453	0.421"
	Vit. N135/25.0	3,437	0.462"
	IMR4895/27.5	3,406	1.209"
Hornady 40-gr. V-Max Factory Load		3,691	0.668"
Hornady 40-gr. V-Max 2.253" OAL	Benchmark/25.5	3,413	1.295"
	Vit. N135/25.0	3,372	1.200"
	IMR4895/27.5	3,408	0.453"

rel cool.

THE VARMINT HUNTER'S RETICLE

The Varmint Hunter's Reticle is available in Leupold's VX-III scope models and consists of a series of aiming point lines and dots radiating out from the bottom leg of the cross hair to help you hit little targets far in the distance. The Reticle's aiming marks are spaced to accommodate the trajectory of three classes of cartridges.

The class of cartridges with the

most drop includes, among others, the .223 Remington shooting a 55-grain bullet at 3,250 fps and the .243 Winchester shooting a 75-grain bullet at 3,400 fps. Rifles chambered for these cartridges are sighted dead on with the top cross wire at 200 yards and the magnification dial set on a small triangle just past the 10x setting on the 4.5-14x scope. The aiming marks below on the vertical cross hair then can be used to hit targets at 300, 400, and 500 yards.

The flattest shooting class of cartridges includes the .220 Swift and .22-250 shooting 40-grain bullets at about 4,200 fps. Although the Leupold instruction manual for its aiming system does not include the .204, it should be in this group as its 32-grain bullet drop sighted-in at 200 yards is about 32 inches low at 500 yards. Rifles chambered for these cartridges are sighted-in with the top cross wire dead on at 300 yards and the scope's magnification dial turned to the mark of a large triangle (14x on the 4.5-14x scope). The lower aiming marks then can be used to aim on a target at distances of 400, 500, and 600 yards.

The middle class of cartridges includes the .223 Remington shooting a 40-grain bullet at 3,800 fps and the .22-250 shooting a 55-grain bullet at 3,650 fps. As it turned out, the .204 with the 32-grain V-Max also fell into this category. With the 4.5-14x40mm scope set on 14x (marked with a large triangle), I sighted-in the XR-100 and the 32-grain V-Max at 200 yards (2.35 inch three-shot group). Aiming with the next lower cross wire, the 32-grain V-Max bullets hit a bit less than 1 inch low at 300 yards (1.76-inch three-shot group). That's not exact, but more than close enough to hit any prairie dog. Next I shot a group at 100 yards to see where this sight setting placed bullets at that distance. The 0.93-inch group was 0.70 inch high.

This new reticle also includes 10 and 20 mile per hour windage holding points marked along the top horizontal cross hair and at the ends and suspended out from the three lower aiming lines.

The Varmint Hunter's Reticle also includes a rangefinder of sorts. The ver-

tical space between the top of the bottom post and the 500-yard aiming wire is enough to bracket a prairie dog at 300 yards when the 4.5-14x scope is set on 14x. That opening covers 3 inches at 100 yards. So I guess the Leupold folks consider a prairie dog to stand 9 inches tall. I've never measured one, but it sounds good to me. Not all that much fiddling with the power dial would be required to figure out the correct spacing for a coyote or other animal, at a certain distance, to fit between the space.

IN THE FIELD

Remington declares the XR-100 is a target rifle. Shooting paper targets is fine for firing a box or two of cartridges. But getting the most fun out of the rifle requires a trip to shoot gophers in the field. So that's what my long-time friend Bob Pfennigs and I did this past spring. Bob and I both recently turned 51 and we have been shooting gophers together for, well, a long time and still get most of our entertainment that way during the spring and summer.

We shot Hornady factory loads with the 32- and 40-grain V-Max bullets and the Winchester Super-X load with the 34-grain hollow-point bullets. Most of our shots were just short of or on the other side of 200 yards, with a few reaching 300 yards.

Bob's job requires him to put people's affairs in order. So on weekends he likes to take things apart. He took right to the XR-100. I started spotting with my binocular.

We shot from a rise out across a big flat of grass. Other than a few mounds and a cow trail wandering across the flat, the ground contained no marks to use as a reference to point out a gopher. Relaying a gopher's location

to Bob went something like: "See the second wood fence post down to your left? Well, go three metal posts to the right of it and then straight behind it about a hundred yards. There's a dried out thistle sticking up there and right below it is a gopher." Bob followed the directions through the scope by twisting down the Leupold's power dial for a wide field of view. When he spotted the gopher he turned the power back up for a shot.

Bob and I took turns shooting over the next three hours and fired about 150 rounds. We agreed the Hornady 32-grain and Winchester 34-grain bullets moved the XR-100 so little on firing that we saw nearly every bullet strike. However, we also agreed the Hornady 40-grain bullet definitely hit the gophers harder at all ranges.

We used the Leupold Varmint Hunter's reticle a few times. The air was rather calm so there was no opportunity to use the windage dots. If we estimated the distance correctly, the second aiming point put a bullet right on a gopher at 300 yards.

Bob and I started out shooting open-sighted .22 rifles, and over the years the quality of our toys has progressed. The Remington XR-100 rifle and the Leupold scope definitely are a new high point for us.



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Pro-Shot

If you start shooting a .204 Ruger, chances are you'll need a new, smaller diameter rod to clean your rifle bore. If that's the case, Pro-Shot Products sells 20 caliber bore brushes, spear tipped jags, and one-piece stainless steel cleaning rods.

I used the 20 caliber Pro-Shot Stainless Steel Micro-Polished cleaning rod with The Stopper bore guide to clean the Remington XR-100 rifle. The rod's thin aluminum handle didn't drag across the high comb on the rifle. The rod also rotated inside the handle, allowing the bore brush and patches to follow the rifling grooves and clean more thoroughly.

Pro-Shot says its 1 Step Gun Cleaner & Lubricant has no odor and Pro-Shot states its formula is made with "environmentally friendly ingredients." So I wondered how well it would remove powder and copper fouling from the Remington .204's bore.

While shooting at the range I cleaned after firing 20 shots. 1 Step seemed to remove most of the powder fouling with only two patches. At home I left the bore wet with 1 Step for a day, then scrubbed it with a Pro-Shot brush 40 strokes. Then a few times a day I ran a wet patch through the bore. Then I ran a patch with a strong ammonia cleaner through the bore. A dry patch run through 10 minutes later came out with just a hint of blue fouling, indicating the bore was fairly well clean.

Pro-Shot's new Copper Solvent IV is what you need if the bore of your rifle gathers copper fouling like lobbyists collect congressmen. The solvent is charged with positive ions that "search out the negatively charged copper and copper oxide molecules," Pro-Shot states.