

The Thompson/Center Venture in .22-250

by Technical Advisor Brendan Atkinson



At some time or another, every shooter feels the need to go out and purchase another rifle. Those who play golf would understand this - you need various sticks to perform well, and after all, you wouldn't like to do 18 holes with just a putter. Now comes the interesting and sometimes confusing part. With a vast array of excellent rifles now available to shooters in this country, it is really advisable to put a bit of thought into what you want to purchase *before* entering a gunshop. Some shooters are very 'brand faithful' and will only have one manufacturer in their safe, whereas others prefer a collection of makes. Then, we come to calibre choice.

There is no 'all-round calibre' as

such, but in certain parts of Australia, the type of game available can dictate just how big a cartridge will get you through. In South Australia, a good-shooting .22-250 will take down all of the common game that a shooter will come across. I burned up a number of Remington and Sako .22-250 barrels in the 1970s and '80s despatching game up to the size of large goats in the Flinders Ranges and never felt undergunned. Careful bullet choice played a large part in this.

The rifle under review here is a Thompson/Center Venture in .22-250-calibre. It is a lightweight blued sporter with a composite stock - in other words, an ideal carry-around rifle for serious feral hunting.

The Venture is a bolt-action repeater and is based around the

Thompson/Center cylindrical action. This is a real workhorse of an action and its .85"-diameter bolt incorporates three locking lugs set 120 degrees apart and locking into the action. It looks similar to the Omark bolt, but that was designed to lock into the barrel.

A Sako-style extractor sits on one of the bolt lugs and a spring and plunger type ejector throws cases out of the action with considerable vigour. In kee

ping with this style of bolt action, the diameter of the locking lugs is the same as the bolt body diameter. On the top of the action, we find factory-installed Weaver-type bases and there are a vast number of scope ring styles that will connect up to these.

The bolt handle is relatively short and with the 60-degree lift that comes with a three-lug action, it requires some effort to open. There are different-style bolt handles available from Thompson/Center at extra cost and these may be viewed on their website.

The Thompson/Center Venture broken down into its components. There's no surprises there, as it is simplicity itself.





The Venture has a hunting-weight barrel and tapers down to .65" at the muzzle. The target crown is standard.

The detachable magazine will hold three rounds of ammunition and is released by activating a small lever at the front of the magazine. Rounds fed smoothly from the magazine, with no incidents of hang-ups during our testing. This is important, as the last thing a shooter needs is a magazine that does not release ammunition smoothly, and yes, there are some brands and models out there with these problems. It is also possible to single-load the Venture by placing rounds directly into the chamber and closing the bolt on them; that is, they don't have to be fed from the magazine.

The trigger is described as 'fully adjustable' and was releasing at just less than 3.5lb as delivered. The owner's manual contains instructions for altering the weight of pull and an Allen key is provided. Due to the



The matte-black composite stock had Hogue 'traction grip' panels fitted. These are designed to provide grip even when hands are wet and slippery.



For testing, a 4-12x40 Meopta Meostar R1 scope in Leupold 30mm QD rings was fitted to the rifle.

crispness of the trigger, we left it at the factory setting.

The match-grade 22" barrel features 5R rifling and a precision crown. For the .22-250-calibre, it has a rifling twist of one turn in 12" and this will stabilise bullets up to 60 grains in weight or maybe more, depending on bullet type. It is a hunting-weight barrel and tapers to 0.65" at the muzzle. There is no provision for open sights.

The term '5R rifling' refers to actual shape of the rifling, which differs from the norm, in that, the angle where the rifling meets the bore is gradual rather than 90 degrees. This is claimed to increase accuracy, due to less bullet distortion, and is used in many precision bores such as on the Remington M24 SWS rifle. It certainly makes the bore easy to clean with conventional patches and brushes, and a thorough examination with my borescope confirmed this.

The stock is of composite construction and is therefore quite light. Thompson/Center does not employ a cheekpiece on the Venture, so the rifle could be used by either a left- or right-handed shooter. The stock has a matte-black finish, with grey Hogue inserts on the fore-end and pistol grip. These have 'traction panels' on them to give a secure grip in slippery conditions. There is a generous recoil pad supplied, but on a .22-250,

the recoil is negligible anyway. QD mounts are supplied front and rear.

Upon dismantling the rifle, I noted that there is no additional bedding between action and stock and the barrel is free-floated. When retorquing the two take-down screws before range testing, it did appear that the action was sitting comfortably and the barrel was centred in the barrel channel.

As I always say, a good rifle needs a good scope and I fitted a Meopta Meostar R1 in Leupold 30mm QD rings. This scope has a power range of 4-12x and was a good match for the rifle and calibre.

Range testing

Most manufacturers produce a variety of loadings for the .22-250-calibre. I believe that bullet weights between 50 and 55 grains are most suitable - anything less than this seems pointless and weights above 55 grains need careful handloading and bullet choice.

Thompson/Center provides an accuracy guarantee with their rifles and for this model, it is three shots into less than 1" at 100 yards with premium ammunition. We would see if that held up in actual testing. Two five-shot groups were fired with each type at two distances. The results

The Thompson/Center Venture in .22-250

with factory ammunition are shown in the accompanying table.

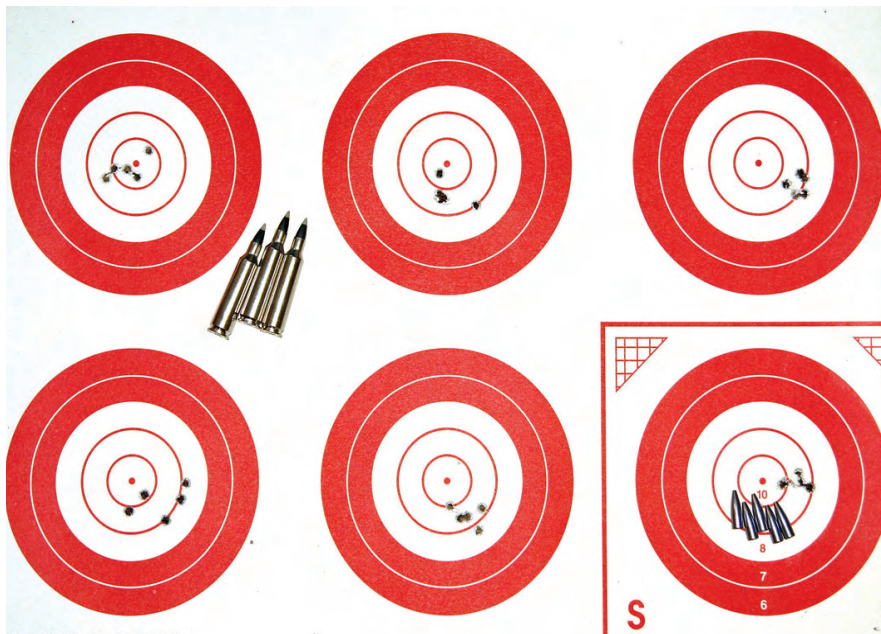
Grouping with factory ammunition

Brand and weight	100m	200m
Fed Power Shok 55gr PSP	.984	1.816
Fed Premium 55gr Ballistic Tip	.886	1.622
Win Supreme 50gr Silvertip	.990	1.762
Rem 55gr PSP	.966	1.988

The .22-250 is an easy cartridge to handload for. The Australian-made AR2208 is an excellent powder for this application and a load of between 35 and 36.5 grains behind quality bullets usually produces both speed and accuracy in most rifles. Good results have also been achieved using AR2206H with similar loadings. Slightly higher velocities have been achieved with the latter powder, but I have had better accuracy with AR2208.

I loaded Nosler 55-grain Ballistic Tips to a velocity of just less than 3700fps and was able to hold five-shot groups at less than 1" at 100m and around 1.75" at 200m. This is very

The Venture devoured all manner of ammunition and shot well. The four groups on the left were shot with factory-loaded rounds, while the two on the right were shot with match handloads.



The Venture bolt features three locking lugs and a short, swept-back bolt handle.

good hunting accuracy and will deliver the goods out to the practicable limit of the cartridge. Remember that this is a hunting rifle, not a heavy-barrelled varmintier.

In an effort to see just how much accuracy I could find in this barrel, I loaded some of Karl Kuehn's 52-grain match bullets over a carefully worked up load of Benchmark Two. With a little fiddling of the seating depth (which did not allow the loaded rounds to fit in the magazine), I obtained some groups that approached the 0.5" mark at 100m. This indicated to me that a fastidious handloader could have a lot of fun tuning up this rifle.

Conclusions

I have tested a number of Thompson/Center rifles now and every one



The Venture magazine holds three rounds comfortably, but those who handload will have to watch overall cartridge length carefully.

of them has impressed me with its accuracy and simple, no-fuss design. I believe that the secret to the accuracy lies in that unique match-quality 5R barrel. The fact that they are a budget-priced rifle still surprises me. This model retails for around \$1100. Check one out at your favourite gunshop and see if you agree.

Thompson/Center Venture rifles are distributed in Australia by Frontier Arms and carry a limited lifetime warranty for the original owner - full details are in the owner's manual. ●

Specifications

Manufacturer: Thompson/Center Arms, USA
Distributor: Frontier Arms
Model: Venture
Calibre: .204, .223, .22-250 (tested), .243, 7mm-08, .308, .270, .30-06, .300WM, 7mm RM
Action: Thompson/Center's cylindrical turn-bolt repeater
Magazine: Detachable, holds three rounds
Barrel: Match-grade, 22", 5R rifling
Stock: Composite with Hogue side panels
Overall Length: 41.75"
Weight: 6.75lb bare
RRP: \$1100