

CARTRIDGE TALK:

Most of us are pretty familiar with the old “stand-by” hunting cartridges for bolt action rifles. The 25-06, 270 Win., 30-06 and 300 Win. Mag. have been around a long time and they still do a great job handling a variety of hunting scenarios.

Over the last few years, bullet technology has changed dramatically. Newer bullets have much higher ballistic coefficients (BC) than previous designs. The higher BC helps the bullet retain more of its initial velocity and energy over distance. Higher BC values also reduce wind drift significantly.

The net result is that you get a flatter shooting, harder hitting bullet, with less wind drift than previously possible and this makes it very worthwhile to look at cartridges you might not have considered in the past.

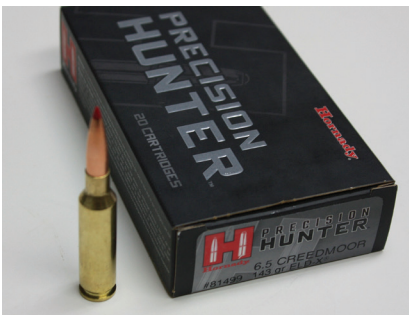
As hunting rifle builders, we look at the overall performance and design of every rifle we build. This means optimizing the weight, balance, dimensions and recoil for your hunting conditions and for the type of animals you will hunt.

While muzzle brakes and suppressors eliminate most recoil concerns, muzzle brakes are devastatingly loud and harmful to your hearing and suppressors are extremely long and cumbersome to use on a hunting rifle.

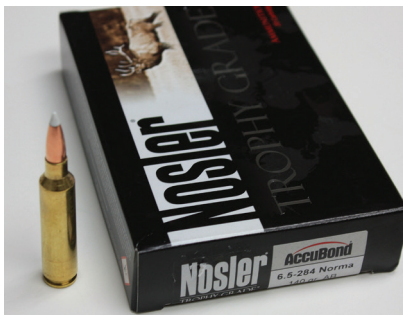
Using new bullets with high BC's in different cartridges allows you to get great ballistic and lethal performance in a perfectly designed rifle without the downsides or recoil, muzzle brakes, or suppressors.

THREE GREAT CARTRIDGES TO CONSIDER:

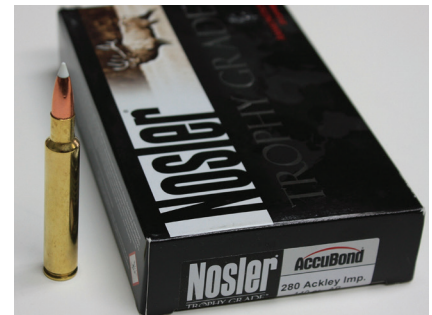
6.5 Creedmoor



6.5X284 Norma



280 Ackley Improved



CARTRIDGE #1: THE 6.5 CREEDMOOR

To me, the 6.5 Creedmoor is the poster child for what these new bullet designs produce. The 6.5 Creedmoor is built on a short action and optimum barrel length is 22” to 24”. Recoil is just a smidge over a 243 Winchester but ballistic and lethal performance is better than a 270 Win. This has been a tremendous round for Antelope, Whitetail Deer, Mule Deer, Caribou, and medium to small African plains game.

CONSIDER THESE QUICK STATISTICS:

- At 200 yards the 270 has only 132 more foot pounds of energy than the 6.5 Creedmoor.
- At 300 yards this drops to just 40 foot pounds. However, with a 10 MPH crosswind, the 6.5 Creedmoor shows only 4.94” of wind drift while the 270 shows 6.2” of wind drift.

At 500 yards, the 6.5 Creedmoor outperforms the 270 by an even greater margin. The 6.5 Creedmoor has 1348 ft-lb of energy while the 270 has dropped to 1255 ft-lb. The 6.5 Creedmoor has more than enough energy for deer sized game at 500 yards. Wind drift for the 6.5 Creedmoor is only 14.5" while the wind drift for the 270 is 18.52".

Add the fact that the 6.5 Creedmoor uses a short action and has about half the recoil of the 270 Winchester and these results are even more impressive.

This makes a fantastic lightweight rifle for deer and sheep. It is also great as a youth or ladies caliber, allowing for very low recoil without sacrificing killing power. None of us want the hunter to experience the remorse that a wounded, lost animal causes as this often ends hunting careers early. The energy and high sectional density of the 6.5 Creedmoor help prevent this from happening.

The ballistic performance is so impressive in the 6.5 Creedmoor that it is also our #1 chambering for our Tactical Course Rifle. We shoot steel plates out to 1500 yards very effectively with this round (147 ELD) and barrel life is quite long, usually exceeding 3000 rounds before accuracy suffers.

Factory ammo used for this comparison: Hornady 143 ELDX 6.5 Creedmoor vs Nosler Trophy 130 Accubond 270 Win.

CARTRIDGE #2: THE 6.5X284 NORMA

The 6.5X284 Norma is famous in what we used to call "long range" competitions. It has held many 1000 yard records. From a factory ammunition standpoint, it is not that different from the 6.5 Creedmoor but the fact that it uses a long action instead of a short action makes it much friendlier to handloaders that want to use bullets with super-high BC's such as the Berger VLD. The longer magazine box makes it easy to seat bullets to whatever overall cartridge length you need to get the optimum distance from the rifling, without seating the bullet so deep in the case that it crowds out gunpowder or spikes pressure.

You will also get 100 to 150 feet per second more velocity than the 6.5 Creedmoor. So, the ballistic data gets even better. Recoil is equivalent to a 25-06 and this has been a tremendous cartridge for our light weight Sheep Rifles. At about 6 pounds, the rifle has perfect balance and very low recoil, making a perfect pack rifle for sheep and deer.

Downside: Factory ammo selection is limited.

CARTRIDGE #3: THE 280 ACKLEY IMPROVED

PO Ackley started altering non-belted rifle cases many decades ago. He would reduce the amount of taper in a given case, and make the shoulder angle steeper, resulting in greater case capacity (more room for gunpowder!). In our experience, the 280 Ackley Improved has been the most popular of all the Ackley Improved rounds. The process added a solid 200 feet per second to the standard 280 Remington and got very close to the 7mm Remington Magnum without the severe "Magnum" recoil.

The round was exclusive to handloaders until fairly recently. Nosler did the hunting world a favor and made this a standard factory cartridge. Since then it has taken off like wildfire.

The primary benefit is that it is very close to the 7mm Remington Magnum in ballistics but has much less recoil. Felt recoil is just a bit more than a 270 Winchester. The magazine holds four rounds vs the three-round capacity of the 7mm Magnum. And, barrel life is longer since the cartridge burns less powder to achieve velocity.

To show just how similar the ballistic data is between the 7mm Rem. Mag. and the 280 AI, we compared factory Nosler Trophy Grade ammunition in both rounds, using Nosler's 140 grain Accubond.

At 100 yards, the 7mm Remington Mag. is only 49 feet per second faster than the 280 AI. At 500 yards the difference in velocity is still only 42 fps (2447 vs 2405). At 500 yards, the 7mm Rem. Mag. produced 1612 foot pounds of energy while the 280 AI produced 1556 foot pounds, a tiny difference of 56 ft lb.

Given the stark difference in recoil, the 280 AI looks better if you are building a light weight rifle and do not want to use a muzzle brake or a suppressor.

Downside: Factory ammo selection is limited.

The performance gap is larger with bullet weights over 150 grain.

We always keep ammo for all of these cartridges in stock. Midway USA is another solid supplier. The great thing about all of these rounds is that they allow for lighter rifles with excellent hunting performance at very low recoil levels relative to performance. They are on the leading edge of cartridge evolution and a lot of fun to own and to shoot.

WE ALMOST ALWAYS HAVE RIFLES CHAMBERED IN THESE CARTRIDGES ON OUR READY TO SHIP PAGE SO TAKE A LOOK!

