

## *The Ruger Hawkeye Predator in .204 Caliber*



One of the kinds of rifles that really sets my trigger is the class called Varmint Rifles! I have always like shooting those little bitty groups over long distances. So when Ruger came out with the Hawkeye Predator I couldn't wait until I got my hands on one. It just so happens I won one at the local SCI convention in the Lehigh Valley. What I didn't know was that I would have to wait two months before I could get the rifle.

Ruger Inc. had some kind of million gun firearm sale in the beginning of the year and it literally blew out all its stock with the wholesalers for months. All that being said, I got one and really like it, so let's get to it.

**Likes:** I really like the laminated multi colored stock. Mine has green, silver, and brown laminate running through it and I think it looks kind of neat. Let's face it, it isn't a beautiful piece of walnut but it is a million percent better than cold black plastic. It is a straight stock design with no cheek piece at all. It shoulders nice and has a slim feel about it through the forearm and pistol grip.

The trigger is absolutely outstanding. It is the lightest production rifle trigger pull I have ever felt. I really have to put it on a trigger gauge; I am betting it is LESS than a 2lb pull. I usually have my gunsmith set my varmint triggers at an even 2lb pull.

The bolt and the three way safety are great and typical Ruger. It ran smoothly over the rails and closed nice and tight. There also is this really nice Ruger engraving on the bottom of the floor plate of the Ruger Logo. I think it adds a classy touch to this rifle. With a Nikon 6 X 18 power scope and the Ruger mounts, mine weighed in at 9.75 lbs unloaded. This is great compared to my Heavy Barrel .204 Remington at 11.25 lbs, and my older Model 700 HB 22-250 at an even 10 lbs. It has two black sling studs in the normal places. I was looking for a walking around Varmint Rifle.

**Dislikes:** Yes... I do have one, and only one. This has to be a matter of taste, but I do NOT like the DULL Gray finish on the barrel and bolt. Remember when Ruger had that nice shiny gray finish? I think that was cool. I guess I am a shiny kind of guy. But this flat gray just leaves me flat. ☹ I would much rather either a SS setup, glass black, or the old shiny gray. Again this is probably just my perception on the finished product.

Now it comes time to put this new rocket through its paces. My GOLD standard is my Remington 700 22-250 with hand loads. It consistently shoots in the 200's and 300's five shot groups at 100 yards. So I decided to give the Ruger a break and take my HB LSS .204 Remington 700 with the thumbhole stock. This rifle can get a bit below the .500

mark in the mid 400's with careful hand loads, but it also shoots Hornady Factory 40 grain .204 VMax at 3900 FPS right at the half inch mark or a hair larger. So I took both rifles to the range for a side by side comparison using the Hornady 40 grain Factory ammo.

Again like I stated, the trigger pull on the Ruger was so light I found my shot breaking before I was really ready. I may tighten it up to an even two pounds, I will have to wait and see. After sighting the rifle in, I was ready for some serious shooting.

I took five slow deliberate shots with the Remington. They went in at around the .550 mark. I settled down and took three slow shots with the Ruger. Before I fired the other two shots I went to look see through the spotting scope. I could barely see only one hole? I sat back down at the bench and fired two more shots. Well the first three shots tightly clover leafed, and the last two were right along side. The five shot group was in the mid .400's. The first three were almost one hole! I let the rifles cool down and repeated the five shot group sequence. Same results with the Ruger outshooting the Remington 700. Remember folks this is Factory Hornady ammo 40 grain VMAX, not my hand loads.

Bottom line is, don't look for this .204 Ruger Predator Hawkeye being for sale at my Online Store anytime soon. It seems to have found a home in my gun cabinet, right next to my other Remington .204 and 22-250 ☺

Regards... The Head Hunter... J.C.P.