



# RUGER'S 77/17

## a .17WSM that shoots!

Senior Correspondent John Dunn

**T**he rotary magazine Ruger 77 series of rifles began in 1983 with the 77/22, an adult-sized .22 rimfire designed to have the same heft and feel as a centrefire. It gained widespread acceptance and the current catalogue offers nine models of the 77 marque in five calibres - .17WSM, .17 Hornet, .22 Hornet, .357 Magnum and .44 Magnum.

The rifle received from Nioa for review is the current iteration of the 77/17 chambered for the .17WSM rimfire which can also be purchased in .17 Hornet, an old wildcat cartridge legitimised by Hornady in 2012.

As it came from the box the rifle looked good. Perhaps more importantly it had a

very good feel about it, a nice combination of balance and weight that contributes so much to the way a rifle handles.

### The receiver

This is machined from an alloy steel investment casting, a production technique Ruger mastered long ago. A slab side offering, it has the usual ports for magazine insertion and cartridge extraction with scope mount bases machined integrally into the top flat. As always, Ruger mounts come with the rifle.

At the rear of the receiver behind the bolt handle slot on the right is a 3-position safety lever that works in conjunction with the single stage trigger fitted and pinned

into an integral housing on the underside of the receiver. When the safety is locked on it blocks the trigger and prevents the bolt from being opened by engaging a vertical slot in the side of the cocking piece. In the mid position it blocks the trigger but allows the bolt to be cycled and in the forward position the rifle can be fired.

On the left rear side of the receiver is a simple, spring-actuated bolt stop that has to be pushed down with a thumb nail to remove the bolt from the receiver. At the back of the magazine well on the bottom of the receiver a pair of integral hooks serve as hangers for the triggerguard assembly. With the assembly in place and rear action screw tightened, the receiver and stock are

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The 77/17 .17WSM as it comes from the box.

effectively secured to each other, the hooks and hangers combining to provide a de facto bedding pillar. A plate at the front of the magazine well in the receiver juts down to mate with the edge of the magazine liner to provide a similar effect.

The front of the triggerguard assembly also incorporates a magazine latch and a simple hook ejector that kicks a spent case clear of the action when the bolt is pulled back. The receiver is secured in the stock by two screws, one into the bottom of the receiver ring at the front, the other into the bottom of the tang at the rear of the trigger guard.

### Barrel

The rifle has a cold hammer forged barrel just under 47cm - 13cm shorter than the last 77/17 I looked at - with a diameter of 23.34mm at the receiver and 18.95mm at the muzzle. The end of the barrel is recessed with a bevelled crown on the rifling which has six grooves with a 1:9 right-hand twist. Like the receiver, the barrel has a matte stainless finish. No sights are fitted.



Top view of receiver showing 3-positional safety at rear of the bolt and integral rear scope mount base. Notice bolt lug forward of the scope base at rear of breech block.

### Bolt

The bolt is two piece made from stainless steel. The front section or breech block is non-rotating with rails on either side that ride in internal raceways in the receiver. The face of the bolt is recessed with a hook extractor incorporated into the right rail.

The body of the bolt has the same ribbed cross section as the breech block. When the bolt handle is turned down a pair of locking lugs at the front of the body rotate 90 degrees to lock between the rear end of the

breech block and vertical faces at the back of the ejection port in the receiver.

The bolt cocks on opening, its condition indicated by a cocking piece that protrudes from the back of the bolt sleeve where it can be both seen and felt. According to the advertising, the bolt has an ultra-fast lock time that contributes to accuracy. Feeding from the magazine is controlled.

### Magazine

The rotary magazine is made from high impact black plastic and sits flush with the belly of the stock to maintain the clean lines of the rifle, secured at the rear by a latch that's integral with the triggerguard. Within the magazine the cartridges are separated from each other by helical vanes and the magazine capacity of the review rifle was six rounds.



Belly of the 77/17 showing flush-fitting rotary magazine.



Component parts.



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## Stock

The Green Mountain stock is laminated with a flat finish. Both the forearm and pistol grip are chequered and the buttstock is fitted with a grey rubber recoil pad and sling swivel studs are provided. Internally the barrel channel and receiver mortise are cleanly cut and sealed to keep out moisture.

While I appreciate the stability they offer, I've never been a big fan of laminated stocks. That said, I admit I found the review rifle very easy on the eye and certainly preferable to the plastic offerings increasingly dominating the market. For those who refuse to waiver from their traditional roots, a conventional walnut-stocked version of the 77/17 is also available.

## Testing

For testing the Ruger was fitted with a 3-9x40 Bushnell Engage, the entry level model in the new range of Bushnell scopes on offer from Nioa. Ammunition consisted of three 20gr loads from Winchester, American Eagle and Hornady respectively as well as a box of 25gr Winchester loads. Initial target work was all done at 50m where, according to the ballistics listed on each ammunition pack, both bullet weights loads more or less have the same point of impact as at 100m.

As always, hearing protection was absolutely necessary - this is a noisy little barker. Like other .17WSM rifles I've



Triggerguard incorporates the magazine latch.



Four ammunition types were used for review.



The rifle averaged 20mm group at 100m using the American Eagle 20gn load.



Head of the breech block showing recessed face and extractor in the right-hand rail.



Receiver mortise and barrel channel are cleanly cut and sealed against moisture.

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looked at, the Ruger took a little while to settle down. The different loads showed flashes of brilliance as the running-in process progressed, some producing subgroups as small as six and seven millimetres, all of them throwing a shot or two unpredictably to produce groups that ranged between 22 and 27mm.

It was a similar story at 100m where the fliers in some cases blew the overall group size out to as much as 65mm, though a gusty wind at the target frames was almost certainly responsible for that during a couple of sessions. I'd put almost 100 rounds through the rifle before everything settled down and it finally began to group consistently at 100m.

The standout ammunition at that range was the American Eagle, routinely producing 5-shot groups that ranged from 16 to 27mm for an average of 20mm. That's head of rabbit accuracy to around 120m and subsequent field testing proved that was the case. Over a number of afternoon hunts I shot a dozen or so early summer bunnies at ranges from around 40m to a little over 100m. In every case the results were devastating to the point where I had to chest-shoot a three-parts grown animal to have one to photograph that wasn't missing its head.

That level of accuracy also makes the

.17WSM Ruger a useful feral cat and fox rifle to a similar maximum range or perhaps a little further. Given the frangibility of the light projectiles, head shots would need to be the order of the day. Despite the impressive numbers it brings to rimfire tables the .17WSM remains a small game cartridge - high velocity will only go so far and humane kills at sensible ranges must be the priority at all times.

### Overview

I thoroughly enjoyed reviewing the Ruger 77/17 as it's the first rifle I've used in .17WSM that has come close to delivering all the potential benefits the advertising claims have so long promised with the cartridge.

The rifle functioned flawlessly throughout, was comfortable to carry without a sling, handled well and with its preferred ammunition it shot to potential off a variety of field rests. My only adverse comment is this would be a much better rifle with a lighter trigger. It really is a litigation trigger and while you get used to the weight over time, it does nothing to enhance the rifle's performance.

That said, the Ruger 77/17 in .17WSM is a powerful little small game rifle that will impress all who take time to run it in properly and enjoy what it has to offer. ●

## SPECIFICATIONS

**Make:** Ruger Model 77/17

**Action:** Bolt-action, matte stainless finish

**Barrel:** 47cm long, cold hammer forged, matte stainless finish, six grooves, 1:9" RH twist

**Sights:** None fitted, scope rings included. Review rifle tested with a 3-9x40 Bushnell Engage scope (not included with rifle)

**Calibre:** .17WSM (tested) .17 Hornet

**Magazine:** 6-shot detachable rotary, flush mounted

**Stock:** Green River laminated, matte finished, sling swivel bases included

**Length of pull:** 34.29cm

**Overall length:** 95.8cm

**Weight:** 3.175kg (bare)

**Distributor:** Nioa

**RRP:** About \$1650, shop around

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