

The Remington 700 Gets a New Trigger – After decades, new fire control graces the 700 line.
By Jon R. Sundra

The Remington 700 has been around for 42 years without major changes, which is quite a testimony to the soundness of the original design. That's not to say there have been no changes, however. One was the elimination of a small rivet used to secure the extractor in early models; another was the addition of an anti-bind groove in the right locking lug.

Two other changes from the original design had to do with the fire control system. On earlier models, when the two-position side safety was engaged, the bolt was locked. That was changed to allow the action to cycle in the "Safe" mode, because you need a safety when chambering or extracting a live round. It never made sense to me to have to disengage the safety to do either. The other change consisted of going to a one-piece sear instead of the original two-piece unit.

For 2006 the Remington 700, along with its sibling, the Model Seven, get an entirely new fire control system. Called SPL for "Safety Pivoted Link," the new trigger unit looks remarkably similar to the original, but differs in one major element: the safety blocks movement of both the trigger and sear. All past 700's (and the predecessor Model 721/722 series dating back to 1948), have a safety that, when engaged, blocks movement of the sear, but allows the trigger to move through its normal arc when pulled. With this type arrangement, if the trigger is pulled with the safety on, it must return to its original position to support the sear.

The problem with this design is that if for any reason the trigger does not return to its forward position, the gun can discharge when the safety is released. There are several scenarios under which this can happen, but primarily it occurs when there is friction against the trigger – like if the barreled action is canted in the stock slightly so the trigger is dragging against either side of the cutout in the top of the trigger guard bow. Another cause could be swelling of wood in that area of the stock's inletting surrounding the trigger. That can be caused by high humidity, soaking rain, or wet snow. I have personally seen both these conditions occur on rifles with triggers similar to that of the Remington. I was also present when a colleague released the safety on an older Tikka and the gun fired. That incident was caused by a Styrofoam bead from the original factory box that had somehow gotten into the trigger unit and wedged itself in such a location that the trigger could not return to its forward position.

The new SPL trigger blocks both trigger and sear movement, while still allowing the action to be cycled when engaged. Remington makes several claims for the new trigger, among them: 1) improved out-of-the-box feel, 2) better corrosion resistance, 3) more highly-polished parts to provide a crisper pull, and 4) lower pull settings from the factory. Though trigger tampering still voids the warranty, the trigger pull can be adjusted down to 2 lbs. if done by an authorized Remington Repair Center.

I had the opportunity to test the very first example of this new trigger to leave the factory on a recent prairie dog shoot in South Dakota last May (see the this issue of PX), but I couldn't say anything about it until I got the official go-ahead from Remington to release the news. Now that I've got it, I can tell you it's a decided improvement over the current trigger – which is saying something, because the 700 has always had one of the better factory triggers. The trigger on my test gun – a Model 700V-SSF II in .204 Ruger – broke at an even 3 lbs. and was smooth and crisp with no discernible creep whatsoever. What more can you ask from a trigger? It was a joy to use. Further testing at home reinforced the initial field impressions: You're gonna' like this new trigger!