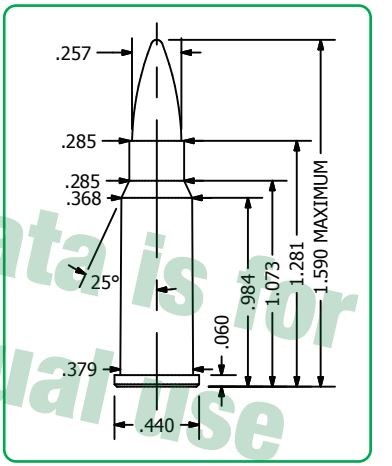
256 Winchester Magnum

Test Specifications:

Firearm Used: Marlin 62
Barrel Length: 24”
Twist: 1 x 14”

Components:

Case: Winchester
Trim-to Length: 1.271”
Primer: Remington 6 1/2



Remarks:

Although the 256 Winchester Magnum was developed as a handgun cartridge, it has been chambered in a few rifles — hence its inclusion here. Based on the 357 Magnum, the 256 was intended as a high-velocity varmint cartridge for revolvers. While some development work was done by a major manufacturer, certain problems inherent in using high-pressure, bottle-necked cartridges in revolvers could not be overcome. Although the cartridge was introduced in 1960, it was late 1962 before any arms chambered for the 256 appeared on the market. The Ruger Hawkeye is still the firearm most associated with the 256 Winchester Magnum. A single-shot pistol based on a revolver frame, the Hawkeye was introduced and discontinued so fast that it became an instant collector’s item. Unfortunately, few other manufacturers showed much interest in the cartridge, and it has faded from the scene.

Although it was never very popular, the 256 is an interesting little cartridge. It provides enough velocity to give good results on small game and varmints out to 175 yards or so. The lever-action Marlin 62 is one of the few rifles ever factory chambered for the 256. This is unfortunate, as the cartridge’s rimmed design is a natural for single shots, such as the Ruger Number One or Thompson’s Contender carbine. Chambered in such a rifle, the 256 is capable of delivering good accuracy.

The Marlin Model 62 has long since been discontinued, and no other rifles have been chambered for the little 256 in the last 20 years. Winchester stopped producing loaded ammunition in the early 1990’s, effectively rendering the cartridge obsolete. Cases can be formed from 357 Magnum brass with little difficulty. Given the tremendous popularity of the 357 Magnum, a supply of shootable brass for the 256 will never be a problem. Brass cases are preferred for this conversion, because nickel-plated cases will tend to flake or peel when necked down this far.

256 Winchester Magnum

Bullet	Caliber	Weight	Type	C.O.A.L.
	#1600	.257”	75gr.	HP	1.590”

Powder ∨ Velocity >	2000	2100	2200	2300	2400	2500
2400		11.6	12.3	12.9	13.6	
IMR-4227		13.1	13.7	14.4	15.0	15.6
IMR-4198	14.5	15.1	15.6			
H335	19.0	19.9	20.7			
BL-C(2)	19.8	20.7				
Energy Ft. lbs	**666**	**734**	**806**	**881**	**959**	**1041**

Special Load	Powder	Grains	Velocity fps	Energy Ft. lb
Accuracy Load	IMR-4227	14.4	2300	881
Hunting Load	IMR-4227	15.0	2400	959

Bullet	Caliber	Weight	Type	C.O.A.L.
	#1610	.257”	87gr.	SPT	1.590”

Powder ∨ Velocity >	1800	1900	2000	2100	2200
2400	10.6	11.3	11.8	12.4	13.0
IMR-4227	12.0	12.5	13.0	13.5	14.0
IMR-4198	13.0	13.7	14.3	15.0	
H335	17.6	18.4	19.2	20.0	
BL-C(2)	18.1	18.9	19.7		
Energy Ft. lbs	**626**	**697**	**773**	**852**	**935**

Special Load	Powder	Grains	Velocity fps	Energy Ft. lb
Accuracy Load	IMR-4227	13.5	2100	852
Hunting Load	IMR-4227	14.0	2200	935

INDICATES MAXIMUM LOAD - USE CAUTION
LOADS LESS THAN MINIMUM CHARGES SHOWN ARE NOT RECOMMENDED.