The following is a selection of pertinent questions about arms, ammunition, and their use, with informative answers by Technical Staffmen and Contributing Editors.

Being able to receive answers to questions of this type is one privilege of NRA membership.

Every Dope Bag question-letter submitted must contain the member's 'code line' from RIFLEMAN mailing label or membership card.

If you are not a member and want an answer, submit your question with your membership application and dues.

(Membership application blank appears on page 121.)

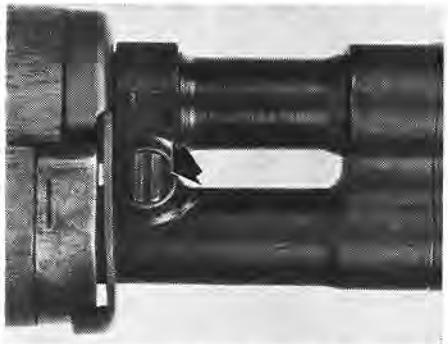
Questions and Answers

Initials carried in "Answers" below indicate handling by: Walter J. Howe, Julian S. Hatcher, E. H. Harrison, E. W. Heter, Jr., Ludwig Olson, Allen F. Ruffin, Jr., M. D. Waite, Frank de Haas, William Dresser, B. R. Lewis, Herschel C. Logan, H. E. MacFarland, Clyde Ormond, Bert Popowski.

M14 GAS SPINDLE

In THE RIFLEMAN *article on tests of the M14 rifle by civilian shooters (March 1963), mention was made of improved target accuracy obtained by firing with the gas spindle closed. What is the function of this part, and how does it improve accuracy?*—R.T.M.

Answer: The gas spindle of the M14 rifle is a valve which closes the port from barrel to gas cylinder when desired. The gas spindle can be turned with the head of a cartridge. When its slot is vertical the spindle is open and the rifle functions in the normal manner. With the slot horizontal, the spindle is closed and the self-loading feature is out of operation. Then the mechanism must be operated by hand.



M14 rifle gas spindle (arrow) at open setting for normal rifle operation

The gas spindle is provided for use when firing rifle grenades. These are many times heavier than a bullet, and the pressure of the grenade cartridge would function the mechanism with undesirable violence. This is prevented by shutting off the gas operation during such use. As a matter of interest, in the M1 rifle this result is obtained by the construction of the grenade discharger, which automatically opens a valve in the gas cylinder lock screw when the discharger is attached to the rifle.

The reason for improved slow-fire target accuracy of the M14 with gas spindle closed, which has appeared at least at times in trials to date, has not been established precisely. Possibly as experience is obtained in preparation and use of the M14 in competitive target shooting, the matter will become better understood and any differences in grouping with the gas spindle open and closed may be lessened or eliminated.—E.H.H.

BORE MARKING

I have a Belgian-made shotgun which bears the marking "CHOKE 18.5" on the right barrel and "CHOKE 18.7" on the left barrel, under the fore-end. What is the meaning of these? Since "choke" is an English word, not the language of Belgium, can these be original marks?—G.L.

Answer: The question is a natural one; nevertheless this is a prescribed marking on Belgian choke-bored shotguns.

The word *CHOKE* was first prescribed by Belgian proof regulations in 1897. It copied the use of that word in British proof of that time, introduced in 1887 and itself replacing the words *NOT FOR BALL* prescribed in 1875, the purpose of which was simply to warn the user that the barrel was not suitable for firing a bore-fitting solid lead ball. The original warning was advisable, since the firing of such balls was usual before introduction of choke boring. Incidentally, this warning does not apply to the use of shotgun slugs designed to be fired in all shotguns of modern manufacture including choked, and regular factory shotgun slugs now on the market are so designed and can be fired without doing harm to the gun.

The style of marking on your Belgian gun is that in force since 1924. The right barrel therefore is of 18.5 mm. or .729" bore, and the left barrel is 18.7 mm. or .737" bore, both for 12 ga. Note that the word *CHOKE* here only states that there is a choke without giving its amount.

An earlier marking, in force between 1898 and 1924, did give the choke diameter. Under this rule the word *CHOKE* was followed by 2 figures, which from 1898 to 1910 were stamped in one line and from 1910 to 1924 as a fraction. The first figure was the bore diameter and the second the diameter of the choke at its smallest part. For example, 17.0 and 16.3 together indicated the bore and choke in millimeters, and would mean a 16-ga. gun of .669" bore and .642" choke.

The appearance of 2 figures after the word *CHOKE* on a Belgian shotgun thus indicates manufacture between 1898 and 1924. Only one figure in that connection indicates manufacture after 1924.—W.D.