

# Colt M-2012

Iconic brand  
taps Cooper for  
a new bolt-action  
repeater.

**John Haviland**

**L**ong-range rifle competitions continue to grow in popularity, and Colt's Manufacturing has jumped on the bandwagon with a bolt-action rifle – the first to bear its name in over a decade. Colt initially partnered with Cooper Firearms of Montana to build the Model 2012 rifle on a modified Cooper Model 22 action but eventually turned the whole project over to Cooper. Now all three M-2012 designs are made by Cooper in its Stevensville, Montana, factory.

*Eden Clark is shooting one of the first Colt Model 2012s with the aluminum stock. Weighing about 15 pounds with a scope, it needs the support of a bench to hold it steady.*



Of the three M-2012s, the first was designated the M2012SA308 with an aluminum stock and a tubular forearm that weighs about as much as a truck bumper, resulting in a rifle weight of 13.2 pounds. A second model weighs 10.25 pounds due to a Manners composite stock with an outer shell made with multiple layers of carbon fiber and fiberglass. Both rifles are mated with a heavy-contour stainless steel, 22-inch barrel with spiral flutes and chambered in .308 Winchester. The third model is quite a bit lighter at 8.5 pounds and is chambered in .308 and .260 Remington. It has a medium-heavy, tapered 22-inch chrome-moly barrel with straight flutes and a laminated hardwood stock with a comparatively slender profile. All three rifles have a removable Cooper muzzle brake threaded onto the muzzle.

Mike Hudgins of Cooper's custom shop originally designed the laminated stock for a rifle to raise money for an organization that helps military veterans. Hugo Vivero, who owns Cooper Firearms, saw the stock and showed it to Colt in hopes of drumming up additional business. Colt liked it, and the laminated stock version is now the most popular of the three M-2012 rifles. The laminated stock version is intended as a rifle for tactical and target competitions with a crossover to big game hunting. It is a bit heavy to pack up an elk mountain, but it would be fine on the antelope flats or when sitting in a stand waiting for a deer to wander past.

Hudgins said one distinct feature of Cooper rifles is they have always been hand-fitted by one person throughout the manufacturing process. "But we wanted the M-2012s easier to build," Hudgins said, so the action for the rifles is derived from a Cooper Model 22 short action with a three-lug bolt and short bolt lift with some design changes to accomplish that. Its recoil lug is a plate between the front of the receiver and barrel and extends into a mortise in the stock. The aluminum and the Manners composite stocks require no handwork by Cooper to bed the lug. However, the lug is hand-bedded in the laminated stock and bedding compound extends 1.5 inches forward in the bottom of the barrel channel. The barrel channel is relieved a noticeable amount on the sides and bottom

to fully free-float the barrel and provide some extra room, because even the stiffest stock bends some when a rifle is

fired with the stock on a hard surface or with a bipod attached to the forearm.

A Timney trigger is pinned into place on the bottom rear of the receiver, and the safety is a two-position lever that allows the bolt to open in either position. The trigger is adjustable, but it was set at 3 pounds on the rifle I shot so was never adjusted. The M-22's bolt release extends into a long slot in the bolt body. Together with the left locking lug running in a raceway, the bolt is kept from binding and slides smoothly.



*Three Model 2012 Colt rifles are made for Colt by Cooper Firearms (left to right): the M2012SA308, M2012MT308T and M2012LT308G.*

The M-2012 has a much smaller bolt release and only its left locking lug runs in a raceway to keep the bolt from binding. The extractor is a spring-loaded leaf located along the upper right side of the bolt face that hooks over a cartridge rim. A plunger on the bolt face throws fired cases and cartridges clear of the receiver ejection port. The bottom of the M-2012's receiver has also been milled out to accept an Accurate-Mag trigger guard/floorplate with a long lever release for a 5-round detachable magazine. The floorplate frame has a slight gap between it and the bottom of the receiver, so the frame and magazine float and do not bind against the receiver bottom. A 10-round magazine is optional. Of course, the rifles feature barrels from Wilson Arms, Cooper's sister company.

I shot an original M-2012 with the aluminum chassis when the rifle was introduced in 2012, but even from a bench, its weight made it wearisome to shoot. The laminated stock M-2012 is much more pleasant to those of us of average strength. A long rail is screwed to the top of the receiver to mount a scope. It's the best of what the tactical trend has transferred to regular rifles, because it provides plenty of leeway to mount any length scope the correct distance from the eye. With a Meopta MeoPro 3.5-10x44RD scope clamped on the rail, the rifle weighed right at 10 pounds.

I've shot the laminated M-2012 .308 Winchester quite a bit over several months. While hastily sighting in the

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Both the Colt and Cooper Firearms logos appear on Model 2012 rifles.



MeoPro scope at 100 yards, the first five Sierra 125-grain Pro-Hunter bullets grouped well inside an inch. A sign of good things to come is always welcome.

To develop a handload to take a measure of the rifle, five different bullets and 10 different powders were loaded initially in Winchester .308 cases. I did not mess with seating bullets an exact distance from the beginning of the rifling; cartridge lengths listed in various reloading manuals were used.



Above, the rail on top of the M2012LT308G rifle allows plenty of leeway to mount a scope, such as the MeoPro MeoPro 3.5-10x44RD. Right, the rifle has a five-round detachable magazine; a 10-round magazine is optional.

Berger 168-grain and Hornady 178-grain bullets may have gotten the short end of the stick due to a hot barrel. To give the Hornady 168-grain A-MAX bullets an even opportunity, I loaded them with TAC and Accurate 4064 and shot them another day. A group with TAC measured 1.06 inches, and Accurate 4064 loads produced a group of 1.44 inches.

As the load table shows, Berger and Sierra 150-grain bullets shot best. I settled on the Berger 150-grain FB



The 2012 is a competition rifle that will be shot for long strings at a time, so the loads listed in the table were shot one after another at 100 yards, starting with the lightest bullets. Colt guarantees one-inch groups for the 2012, but Cooper promises .5-inch groups for its rifles. Colt's promise was easily met with at least one load with most of the bullets shot. A few loads came close to Cooper's pledge. The Hornady and

Target bullets with TAC powder, mainly because I had a lot of them.

Additional magnification above the 10x of the MeoPro scope would have provided a more precise aim for target shooting at 300 yards, but the dot in the 4C reticle of the MeoPro covers 1.5 inches at 300 yards and fit inside a 4.5-inch circle at that distance with a halo of white remaining around the dot and seemed

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precise enough. With the rifle supported on a benchrest and shooting Berger 150-grain FB Target bullets with TAC powder, three-shot groups measured 2.27 and 3.30 inches at 300 yards.

Shooting from prone at 300 yards, groups were increased from three to five shots. The rifle was steady with the forearm cradled in a Harris bipod and the toe of the stock



*A Cooper muzzle brake is standard on Model 2012 rifles. Muzzle blast is sharp, but the brake significantly reduced recoil.*

propped up with my hunting pack. The comb was thick and plenty high enough to align my eye with the scope, and the angle of the grip was nearly vertical, which kept my wrist straight. My hand fit completely around the slender grip, even with a swell on the right side of the grip that fills the palm. The flute on the right side of the

*The M2012LT308G bolt (top) is slightly different than the Cooper Model 22 bolt (bottom). One difference is the Model 22's bolt has a slot for the bolt release to ride in and keep the bolt from binding.*



nose of the comb was dished out well down the side of the stock and cradled the whole of the base of my thumb. All in all, the stock provided a very relaxed hold and stable aim.

The first group measured 3.51 inches, with four Berger bullets in 2.74 inches. A second group measured 3.99 inches, with four bullets clustered in 1.95 inches. Those groups were only slightly larger than others shot from the support on a bench.

I brought targets back to 100 yards to shoot offhand and sitting. The dot reticle wandered back and forth across the target while standing and aiming the rifle. I pulled the trigger the last bit as the dot passed the target. Five bullets in 3.90 inches was less than skillful, but not all that bad. The rifle

was stable from the sitting position. Four bullets landed in .82 inch. I flipped out one bullet for a group size of 1.41 inches. There was that nervous twitch of mine raising its ugly head again.

After shooting the M-2012 several hundred times over several months, I have a few observations on the rifle and the Meopta scope:

The stock has a fairly slender forearm bottom, and with it on a rest the rifle wobbled a slight amount. As an alternative, Cooper

### Colt/Cooper Model 2012 .308 Winchester Shooting Results

bullet (grains)	powder	charge (grains)	velocity (fps)	group (inches)
150 Berger FB Target	IMR-4064	43.5	2,729	.61
	RL-15	46.0	2,781	.70
	TAC	45.0	2,843	.53
150 Sierra GameKing SBT	A-4064	46.0	2,735	.47
	AR-Comp	43.2	2,761	1.00
	IMR-3031	43.5	2,816	.68
	Varget	45.0	2,811	.77
168 Berger VLD Target	A-4064	45.0	2,670	.75
	IMR-4895	42.5	2,507	1.57
	RL-15	43.5	2,625	1.41
	TAC	42.5	2,628	1.33
168 Hornady A-MAX	A-2460	42.0	2,521	.88
	A-4064	45.0	-	1.44
	IMR-4007 SSC	47.0	2,511	1.06
	Power Pro 2000 MR	49.0	2,721	1.80
	TAC	43.5	-	1.06
	Power Pro 2000-MR	44.0	2,535	1.31

**Notes:** All loads were assembled with Winchester cases and Winchester Large Rifle primers and were fired at 100 yards. Velocities were recorded 10 feet in front of the Colt M-2012's 22-inch barrel. Temperatures varied between 20 and 35 degrees Fahrenheit.

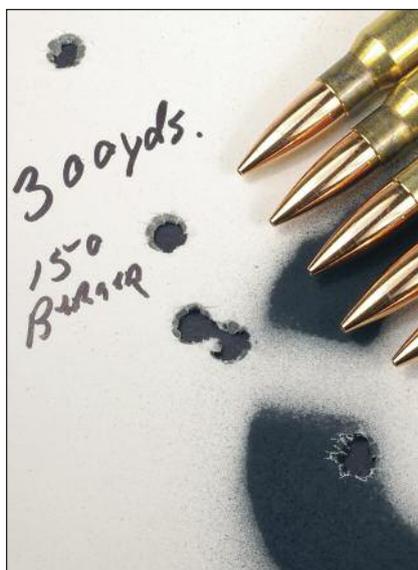
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Left, at 100 yards, the Colt M-2012 shot this group with Sierra 150-grain bullets and A-4064. Above, Berger 150-grain FB Target bullets and TAC powder from the Colt M-2012 grouped these five shots at 300 yards from prone.



A Timney trigger comes on all Model 2012 rifles.

has a similar laminated stock with a beavertail forearm in the works.

The sharp report from the Cooper muzzle brake became bothersome while shooting 50 or more rounds during a session, even while wearing foam plugs and earmuffs. However, the brake did substantially reduce the rifle's recoil to about the level of a .22-250 Remington, muzzle lift was nil, and the scope's

reticle barely jumped off the target paper. With the brake removed from the muzzle, the scope's ocular bell kept hitting the bill of my hat due to the additional recoil, plus the entire view through the scope was lost. I screwed the brake back on and left it on. Bullet impact remained the same with the brake on or off.

Cooper rifles have shown its

three-locking lug action contributes to a very accurate rifle. The 60-degree lift of the three-lug bolt, however, requires quite a bit of force on the bolt handle over its relatively shorter arc of movement to extract a fired case, draw back the firing pin and compress the main spring. From prone, the whole of my hand was required on the bolt handle to gain enough leverage to open the bolt.

The rifle never bobbed a single cartridge. Cartridges easily stripped from the magazine and slid into the chamber. Single cartridges dropped on top of the follower also fed smoothly into the chamber when the bolt was shoved closed.

While shooting the rifle one day, I faced right into the low winter sun. The direct light and light reflecting off a field of snow was blinding. Adding to what should have been a difficult view, the targets were in a dark shade. However, there was no glare while looking through the Meopta scope, yet there was a bright view of the dim targets.

I'd like to think the M-2012's good shooting was all me, but Cooper Firearms built the accuracy into the rifle, and its engineering allowed me to take advantage of that accuracy.



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