

Collecting and Shooting the Military Surplus Rifle



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Tennessee Gun



Article Written by: Zeliard

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Many new owners of [Mosin-Nagant](#) rifles and carbines have encountered what is commonly referred to as “sticky bolt syndrome”, where the bolt tends to be difficult to open after firing. This most often happens with the use of lacquered steel cased ammunition but can also happen with cases made from other materials.

Assuming [headspace](#) is correct (*A “sticky bolt” on a rifle that has been cleaned, has no burrs but hasn’t been head spaced is an indication of overpressure. Don’t fire this rifle again until it has been checked by a competent gunsmith*), there two probable reasons for this:

- 1) Cosmoline and old crud left in the chamber
- 2) A burr in the chamber

Lacquered steel cases (*such as 60s Czech silver tip ammo*) are particularly problematic when there is leftover cosmoline in the chamber. What happens is that when fired, the lacquer and the cosmoline heat up & flow together, forming a rough glue that makes it difficult to open the bolt. The biggest problem with cosmoline in the chamber is that it’s not usually easily detected. When dry cosmoline forms a shellac-like coating on the metal that can be difficult to detect.

Luckily both of these problems are easily fixed. We'll start off with the most common which is crud in the chamber.

The fix for this is simple. Here I have outlined the "at home" method, with a note about the range method afterwards.

### **Tools & equipment needed:**

- End section of a cleaning rod
- 410 or 20 gauge brass brush
- (2) .410 or 20 gauge cotton swab
- Solvent: Hoppes No.9, Sweets, Ed's Red, Acetone, any good solvent that will eat away the cosmoline
- A drill

### **Steps taken:**

- 1) Remove the bolt from your rifle.
- 2) Attach the brush to the end of the cleaning rod.
- 3) Chuck the cleaning rod into the drill.
- 4) Dip the brush into the solvent.

***\*WARNING\*** Do NOT let the brush come into contact with the rifling. We just want to clean the chamber, not wear down the barrel. While it may not do much damage if the brush touches, why do any damage at all?*

- 5) Put the cleaning rod through the receiver so that the brush is inside the chamber but not touching the rifling.
- 6) Using low to medium speed run the brush clockwise around the chamber for 10 to 20 seconds.
- 7) Remove the drill, rod & brush from the rifle.
- 8) Using a lint free rag and your finger remove as much cosmoline as you can.
- 9) Replace the brass brush on the cleaning rod with the cotton swab.
- 10) Dip the cotton swab in the solvent, and repeat steps 5-8.
- 11) At this point most of the cosmoline should be gone. Replace the solvent & cosmoline soaked swab with a clean one.
- 12) Run the dry swab the same as above, but for only 5 seconds.
- 13) Done!

This may not remove all the cosmoline in one go, but the bolt should be easier to open afterwards. If the bolt is easier to open but still “sticky”, simply repeat the procedure until all the cosmoline is gone.

The preferred (*and most fun!*) method of cleaning is the same as above, but it takes place at the range. Hot cosmoline flows & is much easier to remove than when hardened.

### **The steps for range cleaning are:**

- 1) Fire 5 shots or so until the chamber is good and hot then open the bolt. The bolt will likely be quite difficult to open by this time, a rubber mallet can come in handy for this purpose.
- 2) Use your finger to run a lint-free rag dipped in solvent around in the chamber, removing as much cosmoline as you can.
- 3) Use the dry end of the rag to remove the leftover solvent and some additional cosmoline.
- 4) Repeat steps 1-3 until the bolt is easy to open.
- 5) Done! Now, wasn't that a fun way to clean?

If the bolt still has the same difficulty opening as it did before cleaning the chamber may be an indication that there's a burr in the chamber. Again, this is assuming that headspace has been checked and is correct. If there are scratches on your casings this is a sure sign of burrs.

### **Fixing burrs is also very easy:**

#### **Tools and Equipment needed:**

- a fine, curved file

#### **Steps:**

- 1) Find the burr. This is easily done by running your finger around the chamber.
- 2) Using the curved file, lightly file away the burr until you can't tell the difference between where it was and the rest of the chamber by feel.

While a Dremel tool could be used for deburring, I strongly recommend that it not be used. It's far too easy to grind off too much metal using a power tool. As with everything else, it's much easier to take away material than it is to add it back on. Some patience and a steady hand will get those burrs out

Clean and deburr your chamber and keep those bullets flying!

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