

GUN CLEANING FREQUENCY

Dear Technoid

Please help! I have a question concerning the frequency of gun cleaning. I shoot trap with an O/U shotgun. I have read your report on how to clean a gun but I hear conflicting stories on how often a gun should be cleaned. I shoot at a number of clubs and am shocked by what I hear. It seems that the local wisdom states that you don't have to clean your gun after each shoot. In fact some individuals, who have shot for over 30 years, claim that they clean their guns once a month -some have stated that they don't clean them. I for one clean my shotgun after each shoot and can see the amount of crud that comes out. Can you please shed some light on this one?

Another question I have concerns the optimum powder to use. I reload and have tried Clays and 700X but don't really see or feel any difference. Is there really any difference between the major players such as 700x, clays, red dot, american select or is it marketing?

Thanks
John

Dear John,

Gun cleaning is actually rather personal. Some shooters enjoy completely cleaning their gun each time, others do no more than is necessary to avoid damage and excess wear. I have known a few people who literally did nothing to their guns after shooting, but that causes the gun to self destruct before its allotted time. Some cleaning maintenance after each shooting session is mandatory.

I do not particularly enjoy cleaning guns, but I do like guns without rust and guns that last a long time. I clean for effect, not cosmetics. I lightly clean and wipe down my guns every time that I shoot. I am never sure when I will be able to shoot that particular gun again and some of my O/Us (especially the Belgian ones) will rust while you watch if they have been rode hard and put up wet.

To me, the absolute minimum after shoot attention is to carefully and completely clean and regrease all bearing surfaces (hinge pin, etc) and wipe everything down with a rustproofing rag. I also store my guns without the chokes in place so I give the choke threads a little wipe when I remove them.

I really don't do much in the way of barrel scrubbing unless I can see lead and plastic build up. You would be amazed at how much less plastic build up you will get with high quality wads.

So, my answer is, Yes, I do clean my O/U every time I shoot it, but I only clean certain parts. After all, sloth is an important deadly sin and must be catered to.

That is it. It takes less time to do than to read about. Notice that I do not scrub the bores very much or spend much time cleaning the chokes. I have worked out loads that do not seem to lead

up or plastic up the inside too much. I probably should clean the bores and chokes more carefully, but I always figure that you can shoot the dirt out. Yeah, well, that is my excuse.

As to powders, I found that there really is a bit of a difference. The powders that you mention are the standard fast burning target powders. I have no experience with American Select yet, but am quite familiar with 700-X, Red Dot and Clays. Clays appears to me to be extremely close to Red Dot in loading characteristics (but NOT exactly the same, so make sure that you follow the published recipes). That said, I found that Clays burns very clean. Red Dot and 700-X much less so. Ballistically, they are all just fine. I use the Clays because it burns cleaner.

Does clean burning matter in an O/U? I think that it might. It isn't so much the barrel residue that worries me. The key is that the clean burning Hodgdon Clays leaves less burned residue floating around in the action of your gun. That means less build up under those pesky ejectors, less grit on your hinge pin and hook, less stuff on your standing breech and walls. All of this means less wear on your gun and a longer shooting life for it. That is why I prefer clean burning powder in my O/Us. With gas guns, clean burning powder becomes even more important.

Regards,
Bruce Buck
Shotgun Report's Technoid