

HIGH DRIVEN

Dear Bruce,

When I shoot clays off a high tower (40+ yards high as at West London Shooting School) and the clays are driven but off a bit to my right or left, I find that in order to break them I must shoot above them, as well as giving them the proper lead. To my eye they appear to be flying level at the break point.

Friends and I were discussing why this is. Could it be because the clays are actually rising and I am reading it incorrectly? Or at that distance and height does gravity and the slowing of the shot make the shot drop? Or is it just an optical illusion at that height with nothing to judge the clay against except sky? Or is it another reason?

Any answers you can provide would be MOST appreciated.

Best, Jeff

Dear Jeff,

That's an interesting question and one that might have as many answers as shooters. I've had the opportunity to shoot shooting high driven clays at West London, Sandringham and Tall Trees in England and also at a few spots in the US. At the Hudson Farm in the US, my coach for driven was Lars Magnusson, an ex-Purdey instructor. Lars was particularly insightful.

He noted that the biggest problem in shooting driven was that of arcing or looping the swing of the gun. As I was shooting an O/U, he actually put a twig under the rib at right angles to the barrels so as to give immediate feedback when the barrels arced off of the target's trajectory. He also mentioned that it would be helpful to try to address the targets as crossers, rather than as a direct incomer.

Analysis over the internet is difficult, but here is my guess as to your problem: Forget about the ballistics side of things. 40 yards isn't enough to make a significant difference in shot drop.

Also, I would guess that it is not an optical illusion either. Picking the line of flight with no possible reference is simply a matter of following the bird, or swinging through, for a bit. Your muzzle should then assume whatever line of flight the bird was taking.

My guess is that the problem of shooting high is that you are arcing the gun and not swinging it level. That would make you shoot low and to correct, you would have to shoot "above" the bird. Sometimes arcing is due to body position and running out of swing. Take a shooting position which will allow you ample room to follow through without binding. Many people set up for driven by positioning their bodies to be most comfortable when they first see the bird. Not so good. The best approach is to position your body to be most comfortable and flexible at a point slightly after you intend to shoot the bird. This facilitates follow through. If this position makes

you somewhat uncomfortable when the bird emerges, so be it. The key is to be comfortable and flexible at the moment you pull the trigger and a little bit there after as you follow through.

Give it a try and let me know how it works for you.

Best regards,
Bruce Buck
Shotgun Report's Technoid