

THE PARADOX OF LEAD

Dear Technoid,

I would appreciate it if you could shed some light on the following paradox (to me). All good shooting tutorials stress the concept of keep your eyes on the target! Watch the rings spin, look at the nose etc. At the same time they stress not looking at the barrel. Yet, if I see the rings spinning on the target and not look at the barrel how can I effectively assess forward allowance. If the gun is correctly mounted then I will shoot exactly where I am looking i.e., the target. Now the shot will (seemingly) have the correct amount of REVERSED lead. The charge will sail harmlessly behind the target!

What am I missing here? Is someone peeking at their barrel and not telling?

Thanx,

Gene

Dear Gene:

"A paradox, a paradox, a most ingenious paradox!" so wrote Gilbert in HMS Pinafore. (Sir Arthur Sullivan was the lyricist and was knighted for his music. Gilbert wrote the irreverent words and was royally ignored for his parody.)

True, if we really did watch the bird intently, the shotgun rib, beads and all that stuff would not matter. But they do. The answer to it all is that while we may consciously focus on the bird, our subconscious is very much aware of barrel, rib and bead. You see the rib, although you are not really looking at it.

It is a lot like pointing your finger at something. You look at the target and point the finger. You do not look at the finger and aim it at the target. Even though you are looking at the target, not the finger, you would quickly notice whether or not you had a glove on.

The problem in shotgun shooting arises when the primary concentration is on the barrel, not the target. For some reason this causes most people to stop their swing. Don't ask me what staring at the barrel has to do with stopping a swing, but it usually ends up that way. Perhaps it is due to the fact that when you focus on the target, the target is moving and this encourages you to keep moving with it. The gun barrel is relatively still and focusing on the barrel encourages your swing to also be relatively still. I don't know, but that is how it works out for most people. Focusing on the barrel almost always kills the swing. So don't do it.

As I understand the second part of your question: why don't you always shoot behind if you are aiming right at the target (which won't be there when your shot arrives)? Here you are getting into the complicated area of the different types of lead. I am not going to go through it all again here. Check into the past Technoid columns. I did one on the four different types of lead about a

year ago. I will check into SHOTGUN REPORT and if it is not there, I will post it sometime down the road.

Basically, lead is a function of TWO things: 1) where you point the gun vis a vis the target (what most people think of as lead) and; 2) gun speed- how fast your gun is moving in relation to the target. Gun speed is just as important as the aiming point because of the time delay between when your brain says "Pull the trigger!" to the moment the shot leaves the barrel. Lead always includes these two items. You will miss if you only think about one of them.

Take this example. Let's say that you are shooting a High Four crossing skeet target. Let's also say that you have decided to use the "swing through" shooting method wherein you start the muzzle behind the target and fire as you pass through it. (The famous English gun maker Churchill advocated this method for all targets, but in spite of his considerable enthusiasm, it is not the best way to shoot everything.)

If you start your muzzle behind the bird, but fire at the moment the muzzle touches the middle of the target, you should NOT shoot behind. Your gun is moving quicker than the bird (it has to be to catch up). There is a noticeable delay between the time your peripheral vision "sees" your muzzle on the bird and you tell your self to fire and when the shot exits the muzzle. (Eyes tell brain, brain tells finger muscles, finger pulls trigger, trigger releases sear, hammer falls, primer ignites- you get the point. It does take some time.) During this delay time the gun moves in front of the target and (hopefully) provides the correct lead.

There are other leading methods, but the swing through method most clearly shows why you can shoot "right at" a crossing target and still have the shot go the correct amount in front to ensure a hit.

When the newer shooter discusses "lead" he always talks in terms of feet and inches of forward allowance. When the experienced shooter talks about it, he always speaks in terms of "swing" or "follow through". A good follow through is indispensable to hitting clay targets consistently.

Best regards,
Bruce Buck
Shotgun Report's Technoid