

## BROWNING SUPERPOSED AND STEEL SHOT

Dear Technoid,

I am thinking about buying a Browning Superposed (trap naturally), and since you on numerous occasions have expressed your 'love' for these guns, I would appreciate if you would agree to answer the following questions.

Is it (technically not morally) appropriate to use steel shot in a postwar Superposed (I'm thinking of chamber pressure)? (I'm from Denmark where shooting and even possessing lead shot is prohibited! It's a nightmare.)

I have heard a rumor that the action frames on some of the superposed guns from the seventies were of a lower quality. Can you confirm this, and if so, can you tell me what to look (out) for.

As a more interesting aside, I have the following "problem". I use trap guns for everything except for hunting, which is what I need the Browning for. I started out using a straight stocked Krieghoff 32 trap and subsequently bought a K-80 trap also with a straight stock and have finally ended up using a Beretta 682 X-trap (stepped rib and Monte Carlo stock). It seems that as time progresses I need a gun with higher and higher point of impact. Especially the right angle crossers from either side I tend to shoot under, but strangely enough I have to hold under raising straight away trap-like targets. I should mention that I primarily use sustained lead and that I see more than a little of the rib even though I crawl the stock and do not raise my head. I have heard of other and better shooters with the same problem. What do you think is causing this phenomenon, and what could be done to cope with it?

I just love your page, and the first thing I do every morning is to look it up. Just think about what those low-tech shooters out there miss.

Hans

Dear Hans,

You are most definitely correct in that I do prefer the balance and feel of the FN Browning B-25 Superposed to the other guns currently on the market. Over past 25 years of clay target shooting, I have found the B-25s to be the most reliable gun made. Like all guns, they have their weak points (loose ribs and broken right hand ejector studs if you forget to cut a coil off of the ejector hammer springs), but what breaks will never put you out of the competition. My Krieghoffs and Perazzis often had trigger problems, which ended the day's competition right then and there. Perhaps other shooters have had other experiences, but those were mine.

The American made steel shot cartridges with which I am familiar operate at chamber pressures identical to those of lead shot cartridges. Steel shotshells tend to use very different powders than lead shotshells and develop their pressure in the barrel (not chamber) differently, but the chamber pressures are held to the same standards.

Where you run into problems with steel shot is in the choke area. Steel shot (actually it is soft iron) does not have any "give" or compression as it goes through the choke. Lead shot does. The thin barrel steel that gives the Browning B-25s their magical responsiveness may bulge just at the beginning of the choke if you use steel shot and a trap-style Modified or Full choke. The same will happen on any of the older Perazzis, Beretta SOs or Krieghoff Ulms also. Anything with light, thin, responsive barrels. The problem with steel shot is not the brand of gun, it is the design of the barrels.

You can always call up Fabrique Nationale in Herstal, Belgium and ask them. I am sure that they will not recommend steel shot in their B-25s. I would not do it, unless the gun I was using had open chokes. If you are going to shoot steel, get a gun designed for steel, not a B-25. Let me know if they tell you anything different. There may be a way around it.

Briley in Houston, Texas, USA will retrofit a line of "steel shot" chokes to, I believe, the Browning B-25s. He has distributors in Britain and perhaps in Europe near you. His choke work is of high quality (he has installed lead screw chokes in half a dozen guns, including two B-25s, for me) and does not change the balance of the gun at all. His company has a lot of experience with converting standard guns to steel shot and he should be able to advise you as to the barrel dimensions and thicknesses necessary for the installation of his steel chokes. Some B-25 barrels can take them, some cannot.

Lower quality action frames on '70s B-25 Superposeds? I have never heard that at all. As a matter of fact, the durability of the B-25 Superposed frame is legendary. The B-27 "Liege" model of the '70s was an entirely different gun of lower quality. Perhaps what you heard referred to that unfortunate model. Ned Schwing's definitive book on the B-25 "The Browning Superposed" (Krause Publications, 1996, mentions that the highest quality Browning factory production of all time was in the early and mid '60s. I have owned Browning Superposed B-25s from the '50s, '60s, '70s and '80s. All the receivers appeared identical in quality of machining and metal, though the design was slightly refined during the years.

Browning did have a well publicized "salt wood" problem with its higher grade guns manufactured from about late 1967 through around 1970. Browning, and several other manufacturers, tried a method of salt drying their fancier stock blanks to bring them to market sooner. Unfortunately, the final process did not leech all of the salt out of the wood, so some of these guns rusted terribly where wood and metal touched- mostly in the rear of the receiver. This was in no way a problem with the action frame.

As to your shooting problem- let me get this right. You shoot high on your straightaways and under your crossers? Since we are only 3,000 miles apart, it is hard to have the doctor make a house call. A quick guess is that you might be rolling your shoulders on those crossers. Try shooting with your elbows out more. That tends to eliminate rolling. Anyway, that is my best guess from central Florida.

By the way, you also appear to have noticed the same phenomenon that I have: the more you shoot, the longer and higher your stock gets. I think that it is just because the seasoned shooters

have learned to get into their guns better. Just a guess. I could be wrong. I was wrong once in 1967. Or was it '68?

Best regards,  
Bruce Buck  
Shotgun Report's Technoid