

THE QUALITY OF SCREW CHOKES

Dear Technoid:

My question relates to choke tube alternatives for 20Ga Browning Std Invector. The shooting community appears quite adamant on the sub-par quality of Browning's choke tubes (to which I concur from pattern testing results), and at the same time is in high praise of Briley's replacements. My dilemma is that Briley does not make 20Ga Browning Std Invector equivalents in a flush tube version - only w/ knurled extensions; which do not look particularly graceful installed in a Grade III Browning Superlight which I use for the field.

Any other quality mfr recommendations which make flush tubes for same would be appreciated.

Best regards,

Kevin

Dear Kevin:

Like you, I hate the extended choke tubes. I always end up staring at them instead of at the target. To me they are an eyesore and added unnecessary muzzle weight. If I wanted my guns to be longer and weight more up front, I would have bought longer barrels. Harrumph! (I also wish that I had a nickel for every time someone with extended chokes pinned my ears back in a shoot. I could retire and take up writing about shotguns.)

I was interested in your comment that the shooting community generally disapproves of the original Browning Invector and loves the Briley extended chokes.

I have had several guns with the original Browning Invector. Across the board, I found that they patterned more openly than their markings indicated, but their patterns were right in line with the actual measurements of the choke itself. Browning was just unsure how to deal with the multiple use of steel and lead in the same choke, so they took the easy way out and marked the chokes much tighter than they really were. Once you figured that out, everything was pretty normal.

When I was last in London, I spoke to the guys at Purdey about short chokes vs long chokes. Purdey's said that they had excellent luck swaging in very short chokes in barrels that had been cut. The pattern results were excellent. The bad rap on short chokes is that they are a bit harder on the shot movement as the choke's forcing cone has to be a bit more abrupt and there is no real place for a parallel section. That may be true, but it doesn't really show up on the patterning board from what I have seen.

Nigel Teague, the Rolls Royce engineer who is Britain's most respected after market supplier of screw in chokes, echoed what Purdey's said. Teague's original chokes, the ones that made him famous, are extremely short. A good bit shorter than the original Browning Invector. The very best sporting clays shooters in the world were falling all over themselves to get them. Recently Nigel went to a longer screw in choke. When asked why, he said that even though they didn't

pattern any better, the shotgun customers demanded them because they had heard that they were better in some way. That is marketing for you.

As to Briley chokes being better, I am not so sure about that at all. In my Beretta 303 (short chokes, very much like the original Browning Invector), I use the flush Briley and original flush Beretta chokes interchangeably. I have Briley in .000" and .010", Beretta in .005", .020" and .035". Detail cutting on the Briley is better and the marking on the Briley is much clearer, but pattern quality appears normal in all of them.

I think that the reason that Briley chokes got a better reputation was that they came in specific inch sizes, so that you were more likely to get a choke that measured what it should. To me that is the only real difference.

Mike your Browning chokes and remark them properly. If you still are not happy, and if Briley does not sell flush 20 gauge invector chokes, you might get in touch with Colonial Arms or Hastings. Either of them should be able to help you. Just make sure that you measure your bore first and then you can ask them for the exact amount of constriction you want. If you just ask for IC or Mod, you really don't know what will arrive in the mail. Gun bores within the same brand and model of gun can vary quite a bit.

Remember one more thing that often gets lost in the discussion about chokes. By definition a proper Modified choke is one that puts 60% of its pattern into a 30" circle at 40 yards. Different shells out of different barrels will require different amounts of constriction to do this. There is no one choke constriction that will produce Modified patterns with everything. It varies with each and every shell and gun. Sorry about that, but it just ain't all that precise in the kingdom of chokedom. You just have to do your patterning homework.

Best regards,
Bruce Buck
Shotgun Report's Technoid