

HOT 1 OUNCE VS 1 1/8 OUNCE SHELLS

Dear Technoid:

I'm new to sporting clays and reloading. A friend recently mentioned a strategy of his to improve at Sporting Clays - increase velocity to get on the bird quicker. OK - but that may increase recoil, hurting performance. I reason that the 1 ounce 1290 fps #8 load is the right load for the American skeet-like sporting clays. Faster than the 1.125 ounce 1145 fps, with the same momentum, i.e., recoil is the same providing pressure is still comparable. Also, pellet energy is higher with the 1290 load for those slightly longer range shots and tougher little battues and such...

What do you think?

Steve

Dear Steve:

I am not a big fan of hot light loads. Pellets break the birds, not speed. The faster a pellet starts out, the faster it slows down. Most of that extra speed does not arrive at the target. Pellet count is the key to all patterns. All things being equal, when you use fewer pellets you have a smaller pattern. It just has to be. The fact that the pellet gets there with a tiny bit more energy does not make up for a smaller pattern.

The big advantage of a 1 ounce load over a 1 1/8 oz load is that it should have less recoil. By increasing the speed of the 1 ounce load, you lose even that advantage. A 1290 one ounce load will actually have more recoil than a 1145 fps 1 1/8 oz load.

What does the faster speed of the hot 1 oz load buy you on a long crosser? About 6" of lead, depending on shot size and angle of bird.

Personally I load all my 12 gauge loads to 1 1/8 oz and 1200 feet- a standard 3 dram load and generally switch to 7 1/2s after 35 yards. I never change velocities (I know that 7 1/2s get there a little faster than 8s, but I am used to that small difference) and I NEVER shoot less than the absolute maximum amount of shot allowed by the rules. You have to be crazy to give up pellet count. If your gun kicks too much shoot, an auto. When you reduce your shot amount by 10%, you will reduce your pattern size by the same amount if you keep pattern density the same. If the reliable edge-on killing circle with a 1 1/8 oz load is 24", your circle with a 1 ounce load will be only 22.7" across. When you win or lose a shoot by one bird, that is A LOT. I certainly would not be anxious to give that much away.

As to speed, I find that I do best when I run all loads at the same speed. I get used to the leads required and learn that I have to shoot further in front on the long birds. If I start changing shell velocities around too much, I could forget something. If the extra six inches of lead helps you, just aim 6 inches further in front.

I experimented with a 1465 fps 1 1/8 oz load, but did not really do any better with it. The decreased lead did not help me and the recoil made my 303 grunt. I also tried the hot Victory Strykers- 24 grams (7/8 oz) at 1400 over my chronograph. They didn't break the long ones any better than my regular load, if as well, but they broke my heart when I put them on paper next to my standard load.

Remember that higher speed also contributes to more set back and pellet deformation. The hotter the load is, the rougher it is on the pellets. Round pellets stay in the pattern at long distance, flattened pellets are usually the flyers. The hot light loads not only have fewer pellets, but what they do have is more prone to flattening.

Yes, I know that the International Skeet and Trap use higher speeds with those 24 gram loads, but the trap shooters often use ultra hard nickel shot and the skeet distances are short enough not to matter. Both the trap and skeet shooters have to deal with a harder composite target than we do. Many of the IntSk shooters have gone to larger pellet sizes to retain energy for those tough doubles on station four.

I am sure that my opinion is just one of many that you will receive. I would be interested in hearing the arguments in favor of the hot one ounce loads from someone who has done some testing.

Best regards,
Bruce Buck
Shotgun Report's Technoid