



# Quick Shots

by Frank Hoppe

## Less recoil is more

It doesn't matter what class we're in, how often we shoot, or what our averages are, we are still searching for anything that will give us another target here and there. While there are dozens of ways to miss targets—and most shooters have experienced them all—there are also many ways of breaking more of them.

The simplest advice I could give you would

be to point your targets better. The better we point them, the more we break. Pretty simple, huh? The problem with that simple advice is that many of the ways we miss targets hinder our ability to point them well. Over the years and many columns I've written, I've tried to address these problems that cause shooters to miss targets, and this column is no exception.

For purposes of this subject, I have to assume that all shooters will break every target they point well. If not, then it is a gun fit problem or a point of impact problem, and those are not subjects I plan to discuss this time. The problem I want to concentrate on is what excessive recoil can do to your scores. Granted, poor gun fit can lead to excessive recoil, but even if the gun is perfectly suited to the shooter, he can still experience that recoil factor.

Excessive recoil can create several problems. The first would be causing the shooter to lift his head away from the source of recoil, which in most cases is the stock. The stock itself, on a well-fitted gun, won't cause recoil; it is merely where the recoil is transferred to the shooter because his head is against the stock while shooting. The cause of recoil can almost always be traced back to the load the shooter has chosen. In addition to head-lifting, recoil can cause a shooter to blink as he pulls or releases the trigger. This is just another type of reaction to excessive recoil and doesn't allow the shooter to maintain his visual focus on the target. If focus on the target is disrupted, many times the target will be missed.

These two are not the only problems that excessive recoil can cause a shooter. The worst problem of all is probably flinching. Flinching comes in many forms. If a shooter is unable to pull the trigger when he has the target pointed correctly, he has a flinching problem. If the shooter jerks the gun as he fires at an otherwise well-pointed target, he has a flinching problem. If a shooter walks off the post with his gun mounted as he tries to fire at a target, he has a flinching problem. I would venture to say that even if the shooter merely lifts his head or blinks at the shot, he probably has a flinching problem.

Most flinching can be fixed by switching to a release trigger, but getting used to a release trigger and getting back to shooting normally can be a long, tough ride. The best thing to do, if you are a shooter who does not yet have a flinching problem, is to avoid it before it happens. I think that avoiding excessive recoil will go a long way toward preventing that dreaded flinch.

If you think about it, you may remember a time when you thought that more power in the shell led to better scores because you could hit them harder, and hitting them harder had to be better. That time was probably fairly early in your shooting career. It may have been a time when you were tough as nails and nothing could hurt you. It may have been a time prior to your shooting thousands of rounds and taking a beating along the way.

Now think about this: if you had a low doorway in your house, and every time you went through it you bumped your head, what

would you do? Eventually, you would automatically get your head out of the way in order to avoid the pain or discomfort. Right? Or if you knew a guy who never failed to hit you in the shoulder as part of his greeting, you would eventually learn to move away from him the second you saw his hand move. Again, you would be avoiding the pain or discomfort. So if your gun pounds on you long enough, what will you learn to do? You will begin to blink your eyes because you are anticipating pain and discomfort. You will lift your head to get it out of harm's way, avoiding pain and discomfort. You will begin to flinch, again in anticipation of pain and discomfort caused by heavy recoil over the years.

One of the easier and more effective ways of eliminating excessive recoil is to shoot a lighter load for all your targets. I realize that excessive recoil is not a problem that all shooters feel they have to deal with—yet. But if you are one of those who would like more comfort in your shooting, the first thing I would suggest is to consider shooting a 1-oz. load rather than 1 1/8.

If you are currently shooting 1 1/8 oz. of size 7 1/2 shot, you could easily switch to 1 oz. of size 8 and gain in pellet count. A 1 1/8-oz. load of 7 1/2 contains about 393 pellets, while a 1 oz., 8 contains about 410 pellets, giving you a net gain of 17 pellets. Size 8 shot is just as effective for breaking targets as 7 1/2, so you end up with an advantage in pellet count (more) and recoil (less). Less recoil will allow you to point your targets better and, as we mentioned earlier in this article, you will break more targets if you can point them better.

If you want even more pellets, I would suggest using size 8 1/2 shot for your 16-yard targets. You get about 485 pellets in a 1-oz. load of 8 1/2s, which is a net gain of 14 over 1 1/8 oz. of size 8 and 92 pellets over 1 1/8 oz. of 7 1/2.

There are many advantages to shooting a 1-oz. load as opposed to something heavier. The first, of course, is less recoil, which will help you point targets better and break more of them. I don't care what load you are using, you will break more targets when you point them correctly. By incorporating a smaller shot size in your 1-oz. loads, you will actually gain in pellet count, and the smaller size shot will not handicap you in any way. If you reload, you can get 400 shells out of a bag of shot with 1-oz. loads as opposed to about 355 shells with the 1 1/8. A 1-oz. load requires less powder to achieve the same velocity as a 1 1/8-oz. load.

Finally, if you want to save a little money, eliminate some recoil, prevent the flinch/head lift/blink, and allow yourself to point targets better than ever, I would suggest at least trying the 1-oz. load. You will probably find yourself putting more shot on more targets and doing it with a good dose of comfort.

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