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How often should you clean your shotgun barrels after you shoot? I am told so many different things. Will it be detrimental to my scores if I don't clean them regularly?

Bill Woodruff, Coffs Harbour NSW

Bill the "in theory" answer is to clean them after every time you shoot, as there is a danger of corrosion from moisture and also from powder residue. The "reality" answer is that not that many of the worlds best Clay Target Shooters are guilty of over cleaning the inside of their barrels. Competitive Full Bore Rifle Shooters will cringe when reading this! Some Shot gunners don't clean them from the superstition that if it's not broken then don't try and fix it and some don't clean them simply from laziness. I can honestly say I have looked down the barrel of a man who I consider the best shot the world has ever seen and I could not believe the build up of plastic in his tubes and then ten minutes later I have watched him shoot a perfect 25!!!

What does all this mean? Well I would not recommend you follow his example simply for the sake of your barrels health. A modest coating of oil and a smooth internal bore will never be a hindrance to your accuracy, but it does tell me that the plastic wad will go through your barrel with lots of plastic build up without distorting the shot pattern too much. Just how much plastic is too much? I recommend you don't find out. Get into the habit of scrubbing the inside of the barrel with the aid of a barrel cleaning agent and a wire brush and ALWAYS lubricate the inside and outside of your barrels if you think they may have been exposed to moisture.

Questions: russell@russellmark.com.au