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I have recently been duck shooting for the first time and I have had to use steel shot. I was amazed at how little effect this had on the birds. Is it just my imagination or is this steel shot useless at any great distance?

Peter Jordan, Mt Gambier, S.A

Peter the real question here is what do you consider “any great distance”? It is my opinion that if you are shooting at anything over 50 metres with lead shot you are really stretching your ability for clean kills and with steel shot this is certainly the case no matter what amount and size of shot you are using. I have some very good friends in the Swedish team who have to use steel shot to shoot clays and one of them, Pia Hanson the reigning Olympic Gold Medallist, swears that her 24 grams of steel shot number 7’s is useless after 35 to 40 metres to break clays effectively. Whilst I am still doubtful about why we really need to use steel shot in our wetlands, I can say that it is making us more accurate shooters and making us pick our birds more carefully.

I read one of your articles about barrels and front sights for shotguns and I was amazed that you said you don’t use one on your gun and you mentioned two other of the world’s best shooters that don’t either. If you don’t need one why do gun makers fit them to barrels?

Adam Stevens, Melton, Vic.

The front sight and middle beads of a shotgun are only used as reference points. The middle bead is used as an alignment point with the end bead to make sure that the shooters eye is aligned perfectly down the middle of the gun therefore making the gun shoot straight. If you are shooting correctly the front bead or the end of your barrel is only ever seen as a blur in the foreground of your vision. It should NEVER be seen clearly. Hence the reason many top shooters don’t use them as they can easily become a distraction taking your focus away from the object you are aiming at.

Questions: russell@russellmark.com.au