

June 2007

I have recently been trying out some 24 gram loads on Trap that I won at a Christmas shoot. I found them extremely easy to use as far as recoil is concerned and the breaks I am getting with them are superb. Most times there is nothing but dust left. Why did it take so long for these lighter loads to be introduced and could it be an advantage to use 24 grams over 28 grams?

Walter Ireland, Brisbane QLD

24 gram shot shells were made mandatory by the International Shooting Sports Federation in all forms of Olympic competitions and related World events on January 1st, 1993. Only four years earlier the ISSF reduced the maximum shot weight from 32 grams to 28 grams (up until 1972 36 grams were permissible). By introducing 24 gram shot shells the ISSF were trying to accomplish two objectives. They were clearly trying to be pro active in reducing lead pollution as there were already countries in Europe, such as Sweden, that had a total ban on lead pellets for clay target shooting and secondly they wanted to reduce scores. The scores in Skeet were spiraling upwards and perfect scores of 125/125 were appearing in Olympic Trap. The introduction of 24 gram shot shells has been successful on both accounts. Certainly a 24 gram shot shell will turn clay inside out if you put the target in the centre of the shot pattern, especially at short distances. The top shooters in the world continue to shoot roughly the same scores as they did previously as they have the ability to do this no matter what shot charge they are using. What I have noticed though is the reduction in scores of the lesser talented shooters. The average score of a 'B' Class shooter in the ISSF disciplines is way lower in 2007 than what it was in 1997 and alternatively in 1987. The reason? Less shot reduces your chances of breaking a clay target, especially at greater distances such as a second barrel at Olympic Trap where targets are often at over 40 metres and moving away quickly with only the edge of the target facing you.

Walter you have correctly pointed out the lighter loads are a pleasure to shoot with and I totally agree. If you are asking me if I had ONE SHOT to break clay for a million dollars at any Trap, Skeet or Sporting target what load would I use? The one with the most pellets I could get my hands on. Something of the 36 gram variety I would think and probably with number 6 shot. This is where the trade off begins. If I had to shoot several hundred targets to win a State or National Double Barrel Championship what would I use? Not a 36 gram load that's for sure as recoil fatigue would eventually get you. This is where the advantages of the lighter loads come in to play. My personal preference would be low recoil (1200 to 1250 fps) 28 gram, shot size 7 ½ load. In Australia this is the maximum weight shot load we are permitted to shoot at American Trap (DTL) from 15 metres.

Interestingly in the United States 32 gram shot shells are still permitted in DTL and just about everybody who is anybody still uses this shot shell, but again a low recoil load of around 1100 to 1150 fps.

Walter good luck with the 24 gram loads. They have been a great addition to our sport with many younger shooters, lightly built females and even some punch drunk pre 1972 36 gram veterans swearing by the lower recoil they offer.

Questions: russell@russellmark.com.au

