

Adam Calvert is a freelance shooting instructor with a global reputation, offering highly bespoke and tailored shooting instruction in addition to being a Fabbri ambassador.



Expert instruction

Q I normally shoot with 30" barrels but should I use a gun with shorter barrels for September partridge shooting? I have struggled in the past to react to coveys bursting over hedgerows with the longer barrels.

A This is one of the reasons why when I help a client to purchase a gun, I ask what it is they specifically want to shoot? I then break this down into percentages in order to try and get the correct gun for the majority of the shooting they are likely to do. Far too often I see people buying what is fashionable rather than what is fit for purpose.

It has become the trend in recent years to shoot longer barrels, with 30" guns becoming the norm, there are also many 32" guns now being seen in the field. The latter are fine if you are shooting very tall birds as they add stability and pointability but there is no question in my mind that they can equally hinder you when it comes to short horizon, fast, reactive shooting, such as partridges over hedgerows or grouse. In more recent years it has also become favourable for people to shoot multi-choke guns, which I find often leads to the guns becoming muzzle heavy, making them even slower to move.

As a result of both of these issues the first thing I do when picking up a gun which is going to be used for this type of shooting is to check it balances, i.e the gun is neither barrel heavy nor stock heavy. The gun should balance around the hinge pin: a basic test is to rest the gun on your index finger and it should balance there, leaning neither to the stock end or to the barrels.



When it comes to short horizon, fast, reactive shooting, such as partridges over hedgerows or grouse, you want a gun which reacts quickly.

A well balanced gun will feel faster to handle allowing you to move it on to targets quickly. A good gunsmith should easily be able to achieve this for you by simply adding weight in to the stock if the gun is out of balance.

There is of course another way of achieving this fast, reactive feel and that is simply by shooting shorter barrels with a different gun or a second set of barrels. I

have recently seen a resurgence in shorter barrel lengths being used on grouse moors with 28" or 29" now common place on heavier over-unders.

For those sportsmen and sportswomen that are shooting side-by-sides then my preferred barrel length is actually 30" for all situations as the side-by-sides are inherently much lighter anyway and I find that this

extra length adds stability and aids second barrel recovery.

All the aforementioned said, I would suggest you opt for a gun that fits you the best, is familiar to you and above all well balanced. I would also advise you spend an hour with a good game instructor making sure that you are using the correct stance, ready position and method to allow you to address the birds early. ■