

“IT IS VITAL WE EMBRACE CHANGE TO PRESERVE THE FUTURE OF SHOOTING”

Shooting instructor Adam Calvert explains the driving forces and impact of the move to non-lead shot

It has been more than a year since the main shooting and other associated organisations came together to make an announcement regarding the future of lead ammunition for live quarry shooting. They requested that the industry should aim to move away from lead shot ammunition and single-use plastic within five years.

At the time this sent a shockwave through the shooting community as its consequences seemed to be potentially disastrous. Now the dust has settled most people congratulate the organisations for being proactive in the fight for the future of the sport rather than reactive.

The British Game Alliance (BGA) is dealing with mounting pressure from stockists to deliver lead-free game sooner. The BGA is working to manage those expectations and coordinate any commitments to lead-free game with the ability of the shooting sector to deliver, but the reality is retailers just don't want lead in their products.

The question that most people still struggle with is, what does the move away from lead shot mean to the ordinary shooter in the field? There are three areas to be considered:

Guns: steel shot is likely to be the most viable alternative to lead, of

which there are two types of steel cartridges –normal steel and high-performance.

- Normal speed steel can be shot through most nitro-proofed guns that are in good condition and have ½ choke or less. If you have a gun that is choked tighter than ½ then you would need to have a small modification carried out to open the chokes to enable you to shoot normal steel shot (if in any doubt I recommend you consult an experienced gunsmith).

- High-performance steel: many individuals are worried about killing birds cleanly at increased ranges and in order to get steel to perform better at longer ranges you need to use high-performance steel (sometimes called Superior Steel) which can only be used through guns that carry a 'Fleur de Lys' proof mark.

Cartridges and wads: the simple concern here is that steel shot is incredibly abrasive and therefore requires a plastic type wad or shot cup to protect the barrel. It would appear that most cartridge manufacturers have largely solved



Above: Adam has years of shooting experience and can see the demand for lead-free produce is one of the main driving forces for change

this problem with different types of biodegradable plastic wads that will be available for the 2021/22 season.

Performance: As a result of the above if you are shooting normal 25-35 yard game then most guns will be fine shooting normal steel and you will be able to achieve consistently good kills. If, however you want to shoot game further away then you will need to use high-performance steel, and this is where we have seen a problem with performance. If the truth be known I don't think any of us have had enough experience shooting game birds with steel to be confident that it will do the job at longer ranges and only time will tell.

In summary I think it is vital that we embrace such changes in order that we can preserve the future of

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shooting by ensuring there is a ready market for our shot game. I am absolutely convinced that we will look back in five years' time and wonder what all the fuss

was about, but in the meantime we as a community need to be prepared to make changes to our behaviour.

My closing thought is that this is definitely the year to be having your guns serviced and making sure your gunsmith offers you good advice on your own gun's capabilities.