



SHOOT BETTER SPORTING

QUARTERING TARGETS

What is a quartering target? It can be any target in between dead straight, away from; or incoming to the shooter. Even a right-angled crosser becomes a quartering target if shot late, as it goes away from the shooter. Probably 90% of all Sporting targets could be considered quartering targets of some kind; not many birds are true 90° crossers or straight away/incoming targets.

So, for the purposes of this article and to keep things simple, we will call a quartering target anything in between dead straight, away, or incoming, and 40° either side of that – otherwise, we would have to cover nearly every target in the book.

Quartering targets are often missed, particularly in front. They always look as if they are travelling a lot faster than they actually are; if you ever get the chance, have a look at a quartering target at 80° (a true crosser) – you will be surprised at how much slower it is actually

moving. This misreading of the speed of the target often causes our average shot to miss in front. Also, as the target gets further away from us, the lead picture becomes smaller, but the actual lead remains the same – so, again, it is very easy to miss the target in front (if you don't change the picture and keep the same distance in front of the target). On these targets, as with any, where we start is very important. If we start too close to the trap (due to wanting to beat the target, and thinking it is going very fast), the target will end up beating us. This gives us no choice but to shoot swing-through with no control, so that we catch it up much too fast and pass it before we know it, missing in front. Remember, it is very easy to speed a gun up, but very hard to slow it down. The golden rule for this type of target is to employ short movement, keeping the swing under control. The less you move the gun, the more control you have, and the fewer things can go wrong.

So, how do we stop ourselves having a quick shot at the target, as it disappears from us at what looks like great speed? First, do your homework while you are waiting your turn to shoot – know your sweet spot, where you are most comfortable to break the target under control. The trick with

this type of clay is not to try and break them too early. To avoid this, pick a spot where it is still under power about two-thirds of the way along its flight line. This will give your mind a chance to gauge its speed and direction as it comes to you. Watch a few targets and determine where you see it clearly – not as a flash or a blur, but in focus, at your visual pick-up point. Your muzzle pick-up point can be a lot further away from your visual pick-up point with this target, as the movement on the target is small. Now the target cannot beat you: you are in control.

Once you know where you want to break the target, mount the gun into the break zone. You can then check that you are balanced, and that your gun mount is correct. Then wind back just two or three yards – don't move back any further than that, as you need to keep your movement under control (remember, this target looks like it is travelling very fast). Cut out as many variables as you possibly can – even if you are normally a gun-down shooter, keep the gun mounted with this type of target, as a raised gun mount will often cause a miss.

The muzzles must be just under the flight line. Keeping them too low will cause a fast upward movement to get onto the target line, resulting in a miss over the top. Too high, and you will lose the target as it passes under the barrels, either causing the gun to stop as you lose sight of the target, or meaning that you lift your head to see the target – again causing a miss over the top.

