

SHOTGUN COMPARISON

PASS ON PORTING FIELD GUNS

Another test we recently conducted in reduction of recoil and muzzle jump was to have a shotgun ported. Porting seems to be the new rage in shotguns these days; there are at least a half-dozen companies that perform porting on hunting guns, whereas in the past most of these companies have mainly served the competition shooter. The main reason for porting a gun is not to reduce recoil, but instead to reduce muzzle jump. This is undoubtedly important to the clay-pigeon shooter, and we wondered how it might serve the wingshooter, who also has to react to quick and erratic second shots. If you are experiencing too much muzzle jump in the field, then your body and gun-position adjustment time are slowed down before you can take a second shot.

The disadvantages of porting a gun barrel are the significant increases in noise level transmitted back to the shooter and anyone standing left or right of the shooter, including other hunters, guides, or dogs. Still, we wondered if the cost and noise would be offset by better shooting.

Although porting has been around for many years and several companies around the country offer this service, porting a shotgun is something you should ponder long and hard. Porting is a permanent alteration to your gun when holes are cut into the metal on top of the barrel. It can be performed on any gun, autoloader, pump, bolt, or break action, but some shooters believe it can cause autoloaders to malfunction.

The best porting is performed with the EDM process, which uses an electrical discharge to cut holes in a wide selection of designs, size, and quantity, and if done properly, will not damage the exterior of your gun's finish. To see how porting affected gun performance, we had Briley Manufacturing cut ports in the barrel of one of two identical guns, which we then shot side by side. We were looking for any change in velocity and/or pattern density that might be caused by the porting, and when we shot the guns side by side, we tried to determine if porting gave the hunter an edge on second shots.

Briley's porting consists of nine holes bored into the top quarter of both sides of both barrels on stack-barrel guns, and the same arrangement on single-barrels. The comma-shaped, .200-inch, Briley-design holes retail for \$135 for over/under barrels and about half that for a single-barrel gun.

Our initial chronograph data using two Winchester loads, a 2³/₄- and 3-dram load, showed little or no

Ported Barrel Bore Size = 0.725 in.	IC Pattern	Modified Pattern
Winchester Light Target 2 ³ / ₄ dr., 1 ¹ / ₈ oz., No. 8s	47%	53%
Winchester Heavy Target 3 dr., 1 ¹ / ₈ oz., No. 8s	48%	55%
Winchester Hunter 3 ¹ / ₄ dr., 1 ¹ / ₈ oz., No. 6s	48%	53%
Factory Barrel Bore Size = 0.725 in.	IC Pattern	Modified Pattern
Winchester Light Target 2 ³ / ₄ dr., 1 ¹ / ₈ oz., No. 8s	49%	55%
Winchester Heavy Target 3 dr., 1 ¹ / ₈ oz., No. 8s	50%	54%
Winchester Hunter 3 ¹ / ₄ dr., 1 ¹ / ₈ oz., No. 6s	49%	56%

change in muzzle velocity between the ported and nonported barrel. Pattern percentages also showed no significant change when tested at 40 yards. However, our shooters did see a significant change in muzzle jump. With a nonported gun, we found the barrel jump to be between 4 and 6 inches, and the muzzle jump on the ported gun dropped to 2 to 3 inches.

Guns, Gear & Game Recommends

Still, we have our doubts about whether porting itself is a good thing on a field gun. Though our shooters did recover quicker when shooting the ported gun, they also pointed out a significant rise in the ported gun's noise and muzzle blast.

To us, an extra downed bird or two isn't worth the inconvenience to our hunting buddies, so we would choose not to port a hunting gun.

Briley Ported

Ammunition Brand

	High Velocity	Low Velocity	Spread	Mean Velocity	Standard Deviation
Winchester Light Target 2 ³ / ₄ dr., 1 ¹ / ₈ oz., No. 8s	1,179 fps	1,128 fps	51 fps	1,149 fps	15 fps
Winchester Heavy Target 3 dr., 1 ¹ / ₈ oz., No. 8s	1,249 fps	1,170 fps	79 fps	1,216 fps	20 fps
Winchester Hunter 3 ¹ / ₄ dr., 1 ¹ / ₈ oz., No. 6s	1,278 fps	1,252 fps	26 fps	1,264 fps	9 fps

Factory Barrel

Ammunition Brand

	High Velocity	Low Velocity	Spread	Mean Velocity	Standard Deviation
Winchester Light Target 2 ³ / ₄ dr., 1 ¹ / ₈ oz., No. 8s	1,154 fps	1,111 fps	43 fps	1,137 fps	11 fps
Winchester Heavy Target 3 dr., 1 ¹ / ₈ oz., No. 8s	1,240 fps	1,177 fps	63 fps	1,205 fps	18 fps
Winchester Hunter 3 ¹ / ₄ dr., 1 ¹ / ₈ oz., No. 6s	1,309 fps	1,282 fps	27 fps	1,291 fps	11 fps