

FIELD & STREAM®

Field & Stream
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David E. Petzal
Executive Editor

February 19, 1993

Dear Datus:

In either the August or September issue, we are going to run a section that will be something different for us. The working title will be "Are You Ready for Hunting Season?", and it will be new in these two ways:

First, rather than having just one or two people write it, we will draw on the experience of many of our Contributing Editors, just as we did in the two special fishing sections. Second, this section will give the reader specific standards to meet, something that is lacking in most other "get ready" articles.

For example, instead of simply saying "Practice with your big-game rifle," we want something as specific as:

"I start practicing with my .22 in August, and try to shoot at least 500 rounds at NRA smallbore targets at 25 yards from prone, kneeling, and offhand. Near the end of August, I fire 20 shots per week from my .308 at an NRA SR-1 target from kneeling and offhand at 100 yards. If I can keep 18 out of 20 shots in the 6-inch bull, I'm ready."

We want the exact means by which you get ready, and the measurement of your readiness.

We've broken the section down into several subjects, and we'd like you to write on Shotgun Practice. Do 250 to 500 words. Keep it short; no romance, adventure, etc. We need it by April 1. Any questions, call.

Dry -
firing

Best,

David

OK to 600, 700
552-1

April 8, 1993

Mr. Dave Petzal
Field & Stream
2 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10016

Dear Dave,

Hope this is of use.

Yours,

Enclosed:

"Beat the Flinch with an Air Rifle"
Diskette

About 400 words

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BEAT THE FLINCH WITH AN AIR RIFLE

If you seldom miss with your shotgun, you do not need the practice that follows. If, however, you suffer strings of misses at easy birds, read on. You may be jerking your trigger and shooting beneath your target. That's what happens to me, anyhow. I mount the gun correctly, swing it smoothly, see the right picture as the shot goes off -- and miss. At least I have figured out what comes next: training with a recoil-free weapon.

This came as a surprise, mind you. The BB guns I grew up with were useless for anything except playing cowboy. Then, twelve years ago, I bought a serious air rifle to train for big-game hunting. What I did not know was that my bird-hunting would benefit even more -- if only because my shotgun kicks harder than my deer rifle. A recoil-free air rifle does not cure the flinch, exactly, but pushes it into remission, sometimes for the whole season.

My medicine is a medium-priced German air rifle¹ in .177 caliber. With a velocity of 660 feet per second, it is not quite powerful enough for field use, but it has the three features I need: + Light, crisp trigger pull. + Low-vibration firing -- a hard feature to find in more powerful air rifles. + Ability to group within one inch at 25 yards.

You could train at closer range with a less accurate rifle. I like 25 yards because it is my median distance for shots at upland birds. It also happens to be the distance from my back porch to a willow with slender branches, from one of which hangs an empty soft-drink can. I take a dozen shots offhand, then repeat an hour or so later. It's easy to find the time when all I have to do is walk out the door. It's fun, too. The air rifle is so quiet that I can hear the can say "plink."

With the air rifle -- unlike my shotgun -- I can tell when I'm going to flinch. My finger tightens up and wants to jerk the trigger, at first, and the sights pull away from the target. But then, after a few shots, my nerves realize that there will be no bang in my ears, no thump on my shoulder. I get so that I can hit the can -- sometimes -- even when a wind is swaying the willow.

At that point, I am ready for bird season.

1. Weihrauch HW 55, if you prefer to identify it.