

LOVE THEM OR HATE THEM, RABBITS ARE ONE OF THE QUINTESSENTIAL SPORTING TARGETS AND NO LAYOUT WOULD BE COMPLETE WITHOUT AT LEAST ONE RABBIT STATION. IF YOU FALL INTO THE HATE 'EM BRIGADE THEN TRY SOME OF THESE TIPS TO HELP YOU CONQUER YOUR FEARS.

RABBITS...

Talk to any top coach and they will tell you that problems with rabbits are very good for business. A steady stream of shooters book into shooting schools up and down the land to seek help with a target presentation that can quickly develop into a full-blown phobia for some.

On the surface there should be no big deal with rabbits – they are rarely shown at any great distance and, as a rolling rather than flying target, are usually slower than most. This speed thing is one of the clues to many sufferers' problems. Again the coaches will tell you that rabbits are normally missed either



I HATE RABBITS!

over the top or in front – but rarely behind. Yet get too far out in front of a rabbit target and it will appear from a cloud of dust, looking for all the world as if you missed it three feet behind. You then give it more and more lead and the seeds of a serious problem have been sown...

STANCE AND PREPARATION

Unless you are shooting into rising ground, rabbit targets will be below your eye line. This causes specific problems and places a premium on sound technique. It is well known that with any target that you have to shoot down on there is a tendency to shoot high. This is part optical illusion and part a technical fault –

the inclination to raise the head slightly or push the stock down and away from the face.

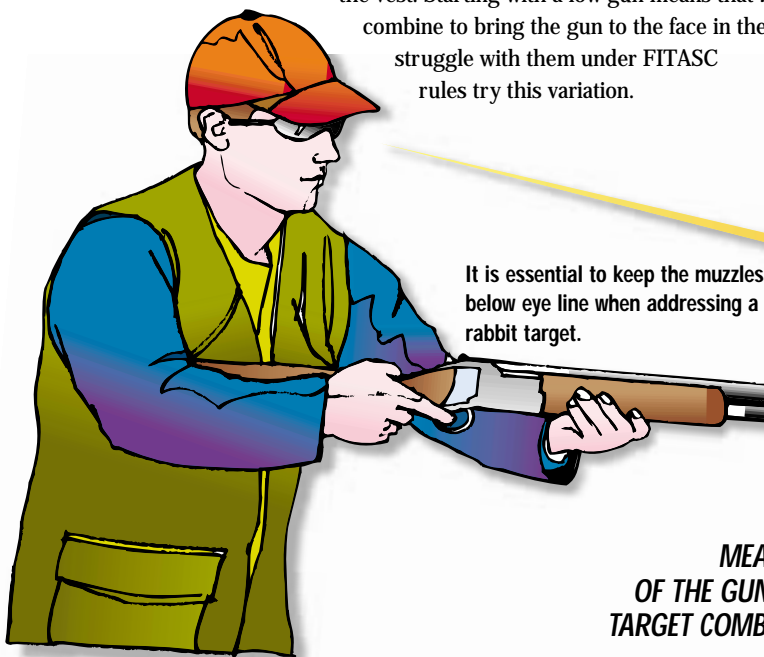
Whichever, the result will be the same – the shot will go high.

Remember that most guns are designed to throw the pattern slightly high so you can afford to aim low. Keep the muzzles below the bottom edge of the target so that it remains clearly in view at all times and let your pattern do the

rest. This will also help minimize any tendency to lift the head.

The correct stance for any rabbit target will have the muzzles below the eye line so that all that is required is to push the leading hand out to the target and fire. If the muzzles are held too high they have to pivot around the front hand to get on track and this makes target acquisition much harder and less precise. Several

top shots advocate an even lower hold point with a distinct lean forward and the muzzles directed almost into the ground about ten feet in front. This can be helpful in FITASC Sporting with its requirement to address the target with the gun held below the 15cm line on the vest. Starting with a low gun means that both the mounting of the gun and the push towards the target combine to bring the gun to the face in the correct plane. If you are normally confident with rabbits but struggle with them under FITASC rules try this variation.



It is essential to keep the muzzles below eye line when addressing a rabbit target.



STARTING WITH A LOW GUN MEANS THAT BOTH THE MOUNTING OF THE GUN AND THE PUSH TOWARDS THE TARGET COMBINE TO BRING THE GUN TO THE FACE IN THE CORRECT PLANE.



TOPTIP

IF YOU ARE UNACCOUNTABLY MISSING A RABBIT, SUSPECT THAT YOU ARE OVER LEADING IT AND CUT THE SIGHT PICTURE RIGHT BACK. FOR ALL BUT THE MOST DISTANT TARGETS SHOOTING THE LEADING EDGE AND KEEPING THE GUN MOVING SHOULD BE ALL YOU NEED. IGNORE THE CLOUD OF DUST AND FOCUS HARD ON THAT FRONT EDGE.

Ignore the cloud of dust and focus hard on that leading edge...



...BEWARE THE OPTICAL ILLUSION OF THE TARGET EMERGING UNSCATHED FROM A CLOUD OF DUST. IT WILL LOOK LIKE A MISS BEHIND BUT IT IS ODDS ON THAT YOU WERE IN FRONT!

TOPTIP

USE THE BOUNCE!

EVERYONE HAS A HARD LUCK STORY ABOUT THE RABBIT THAT BOUNCED JUST AS THEY PULLED THE TRIGGER. THERE IS NOTHING YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT AND IT HAS TO BE ACCEPTED AS THE 'RUB OF THE GREEN'. SOME TARGETS WILL BOUNCE IN A FAIRLY PREDICTABLE MANNER HOWEVER, EITHER BECAUSE OF SOME NATURAL FEATURE OR PERHAPS A RAMP BUILT INTO THE RUN. RABBIT CLAYS ARE AT THEIR MOST VULNERABLE IN MID AIR AND THE SMART SHOOTER KNOWS THAT. WATCH A FEW SHOOTERS AHEAD OF YOU AND TRY TO SPOT A PREDICTABLE BOUNCE. IF IT SEEMS LIKELY THEN CONSIDER MAKING THAT YOUR 'KILL' POINT AND TAKE THE SHOT AT THE TOP OF THE BOUNCE. THEY DON'T COME ANY EASIER!



PICK UP AND KILL POINTS

For every target you should be conditioned to look for the three key points:

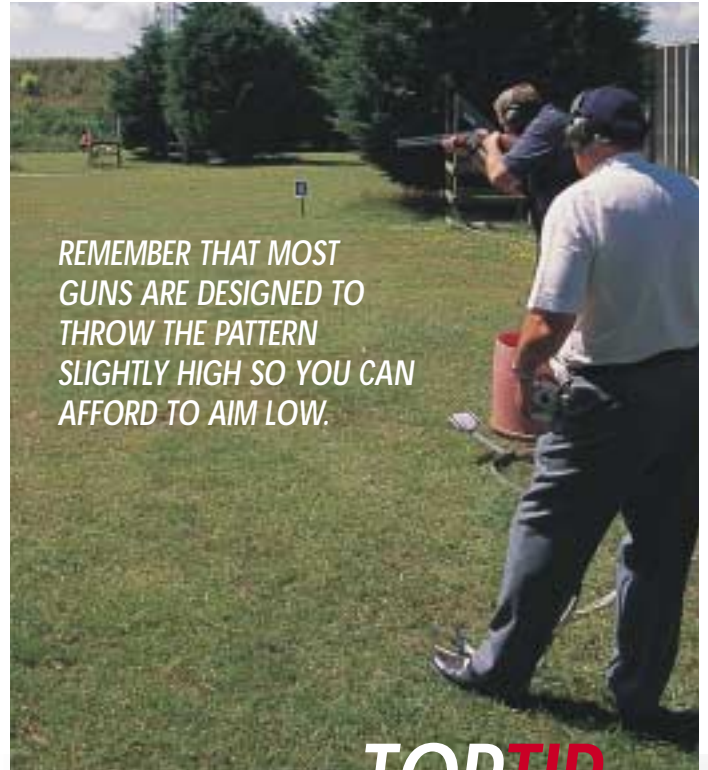
- WHERE YOU FIRST SEE THE TARGET
- WHERE YOU HOLD THE GUN
- WHERE YOU INTEND TO BREAK THE TARGET

Getting these right can be crucial with rabbits. We have already seen that the rabbit clay is slower than most. It is only the background that makes them look fast.

Furthermore they are fastest straight out of the trap and slow down markedly after just a short distance – even more so if they are running across lush grass. It is essential to key your swing to the correct speed. Hold too close to the trap and you will swing wildly after a fast moving blur. As you catch it the clay will be slowing and there is every chance that you will flash out in front. Hold where you can see the clay clearly and it is easiest to synchronise the gun and target speed.

TOPTIP

VISUALIZE THE RABBIT RUNNING ALONG RAILS AND USE THAT IMAGINARY TRACK AS YOUR GUIDE. FOLLOW THE TRACK WITH THE MUZZLES AND YOU WILL BUILD IN A DEFENCE AGAINST MISSING OVER THE TOP.



REMEMBER THAT MOST GUNS ARE DESIGNED TO THROW THE PATTERN SLIGHTLY HIGH SO YOU CAN AFFORD TO AIM LOW.

CHOKES AND LOADS **TOPTIP**

YOU WILL HEAR AND READ A LOT OF NONSENSE ABOUT RABBIT CLAYS BEING EXTRA HARD AND NEEDING TIGHT CHOKES AND BIG SHOT TO BREAK THEM AND MOST OF THE TIME IT IS JUST THAT – NONSENSE. MOST RABBIT TARGETS ARE SHOWING THE FULL FACE AT CLOSE RANGE. OPEN CHOKES – SKEET OR IMPROVED CYLINDER – AND STANDARD SHOT SUCH AS 8s USED ON THIS TYPE OF PRESENTATION WILL GIVE YOU THE OPTIMUM COMBINATION OF PATTERN SPREAD AND DENSITY, WITH MORE THAN ENOUGH ENERGY TO BREAK THE TARGET. YOU WILL OCCASIONALLY COME ACROSS EDGE-ON RABBITS AND THESE CAN BE TRICKY BECAUSE ONLY THE THICK HARD RIM IS VISIBLE. THEN A SWITCH TO PERHAPS ONE CHOKE TIGHTER AND SIZE 7½ SHOT CAN BE WORTHWHILE.

