Special Purpose Shotgun Ammo

By Clyde Barrow

Birdshot, buckshot and the rifled slug are three standard rounds available for the 12 gauge shotgun. While these loads are adequate for most applications, certain situations call for special ammo. Each of the five following loads is designed to overcome a shortcoming found in the standard 12 gauge rounds. 16 or 20 gauge shells may also be used. The procedures are oriented to non reloaders who will be buying and modifying preloaded ammo. The processes should be easy to modify for those of you who have reloading setups.

The factory loaded rifled slug is adequate to stop most medium size game and penetrate most thin metal barriers. Large bones and steel over 1/8" thick will cause the soft lead slug to rapidly mushroom and stop before it has penetrated the target. A round headed steel wood screw in the tip of the slug will increase the degree of penetration by delaying this mushrooming action. Drill a hole in the exact center of the slug and turn the wood screw in flush with-the slug's tip. It is important to keep the screw from projecting past the end of the shotshell case. If a shell with an exposed point were loaded in a tubular magazine, the gun's recoil could cause the point to detonate the primer of the shell in front of it. This is the reason all lever action rifle ammo is of the round nose type.

This load is used to penetrate a steel armor plate, Kevlar body armor and bullet proof glass. It would also be useful against tempered aluminum alloy armor found on current riot control vehicles. A standard shotshell is cut in half lengthwise with a razor blade. The cut should extend from the front end to the edge of the brass base. Carefully peel the two case halves back and remove the shot or slug and the large cardboard wad.

The lower wad and powder charge are left intact. Carefully drill a hole in the center of the large wad and insert a carbide or hardened steel burr or grinder bit into the hole in the wad. This projectile should not weigh more than the original slug or charge of pellets. Additional weight can cause excessive chamber pressure and may damage you or the gun. If you are a reloader, it's a simple chore to weigh the new projectile on a bullet scale and then charge the case with the appropriate amount of powder. After the wad and tool bit are inserted, the case is sealed with a soldering gun. Just touch the cut to reseal it. Seal the sides only as the end should be free to unfold when the shell is fired. It is sometimes possible to seal the case with scotch tape but this causes feeding problems in some shotguns.

Standard rifled shotgun slugs have a usable range of only 100 yds. If a lighter rifle bullet is substituted for the slug, the range is increased several times. This is accomplished by encasing the bullet in a 3 piece coliar called a sabot(sa-bō) defined as a thrust-transmitting carrier that positions a projectile in a tube). The sabot travels down the barrel with the bullet and falls aside a few feet after leaving the muzzle. This principle was first used with artillery rounds and is the basis of the new Accelerator rifle round. The Accelerator carries a 22 cal. bullet with a surrounding plastic sabot. The bullet/sabot combo is fired from a standard 30.06 case. The .22 bullet reaches a velocity of about 4,000 feet per second. This is currently the highest velocity round available in small arms ammo. Several years ago a 12 gauge shotshell/sabot load was available commercially. The sabot carried a 50 cal. machine gun bullet. This round is now out of production and is no longer availble.

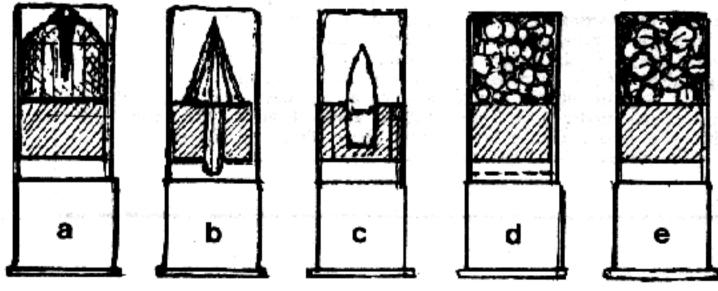
An in depth look at the Accelerator and 50 cal. sabot loads will appear in a future issue.

To make a 12 gauge sabot load, first cut a shell as in B. Remove the large wad and drill about 2/3 way through the wad's center. The wad is now cut into 3 equal pieces with a razor blade. Assemble the 3 sections around the bullet and install the unit in the case. Reseal the case as in B. The bullet will have a range of several hundred yards. As with all 5 of these loads, adjustable rifle sights should be installed to utilize the full potential of the round.

Commercial rifled slug loads are often hard to obtain. An improvised slug load can be made from any regular shotshell. The end is first heatsealed with a soldering gun. This will prevent the end from unfolding when the shell is fired. The case is now cut almost through with a razor blade. Cut along a line just above the brass base. Leave only enough uncut material to hold the case together. These loads should be handled carefully as they may break open while being fed through a pump or gas auto action. When the shell is fired, the case breaks along the cut and the entire front of the shell travels as a unit. These improvised slugs usually stay together on impact but could be modified to break open after striking the target.

Riot shotguns with 18" or 20" barrels are ideal for slug shooting but tend to allow buckshot to scatter in too wide a pattern for long shots. Buckshot patterns can be controlled by tying the individual balls together with piano or picture framer's wire. This type of load is known as grapeshot and originated during the Civil War. To make a grapeshot load, pry open the end of a buckshot shell and empty out the individual balls. A small hole is drilled in each ball. They are now strung like beads on the wire which should be about 12" long. Tie the ends of the wire to form a circle about 4" in diameter. A simpler method is to substitute an equal amount by weight of fisherman's split shot. Tie the wire loop as above and then crimp on each split shot with a pair of pliers. The completed grapeshot is now installed in the case. It may be necessary to remove a portion of the wad in the case to make room for the increased volume. When the shot is in place, refold the end of the shell and spot seal or glue the end closed. Do not seal the end completely as was done in D, as this case is supposed to open normally when fired. The shot remains attached to the wire loop and travels to the target as a unit.

NOTE: Please remember not to greatly increase projectile weight without



- A. Round headed wood screw in end of rifled slug,
- B. Hardened steel or tungsten carbide tool bit in wad.
- C. Rifle bullet encased in three piece sabot.D. Improvised slug made from regular shotshell.
- E. Grapeshot load lead balls and wire.

CHEAP TARGET

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STRAW target backs used for archery are expensive, wear out quickly, cannot be repaired when the centers have been shot away, and cannot easily be made at home even in the few localities where suitable rye straw is to be obtained. An excellent substitute, however, can be made from ordinary single-faced corrugated pasteboard, which is sold in large rolls for packing purposes. A target back of any size can be rolled from this material. The cost is low, it lasts well, and it can be repaired easily.

Saw the roll of corrugated board into 5- or 6-in, lengths and crush the strips as flat as possible by running them between the rollers of a wringer, by flattening them with a lawn roller, or in any other convenient way. If the target is to be no larger than 2 ft. in diameter, it is now necessary only to roll the strips as tightly as possible under your knee and bind with wire as described a little later on. It will improve the target to

CROSS STRIPS

brush the pasteboard heavily with a solution of sodium silicate (water glass).

If a standard 4-ft. target is to be made, prepare a frame as shown in the drawing. Bore the center for a wood roller. It is best to start rolling the target under your knee (with the wooden roller in the center) until a diameter of about 18 in. has been reached and then mount it in the frame and continue rolling. Make the target from 4- to 6-in, oversize. As soon as the rolling is completed, place two No. 6 or 8 wires around the target as tight as possible and crimp them with pliers. Insert a small, hard roll of pasteboard in the center.

When the center has been hit so many times that it "leaks," loosen the wires, push out the damaged part, and roll and insert a new center. It may then be desirable to cut out a wedge-shaped segment from the old part of the target, starting at the new insert and widening out to about 4 in. at the outer edge. Apply new wires and tighten until this space closes.

1940

reducing the powder charge. Always
wear tempered shooting glasses and
hearing protectors when firing experimental loads. I recommend their use
for all shooting, but they are a necessity when firing improvised weapons
or ammunition. * * * * * * * * * *