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Reloading Your Own Shells

By Ken Weinzierl



Should I reload my own shells? Will I save money? What would I need to get started? Where can I get what I need? Are reloads better than factory shells? Is reloading steel different than lead? Is it dangerous? I have been asked these questions many times. In a series of articles, I will try to answer these questions.

Reloading can be a great hobby. You get great satisfaction from downing a bird with a shell you put together yourself. Every gun is different, even guns of the same make and model. It is important to match YOUR gun with the correct choke and shell at ranges you intend to shoot. This can only be done by reloading your own shells to find that right combination. Every hunter should pattern their gun. Most do not do this and have no idea what shell works best at what ranges.

First, let's talk about saving money. At first there will be the initial expense of buying the hardware. So it will take a few years to save money, depending on how many shells you shoot in a season. Obviously, the more you shoot, the faster you will get back those costs.

Let's talk about steel. Today's factory steel loads run a large spectrum. Mostly based on the amount of shot and the speed it travels. Generally the faster the load, the more it costs. This is where steel reloading can save money. When defining fast steel we are talking about 1500-1700 feet per second. Reloads moving at these velocities will cost about 1/2 to 2/3 what factory loads of comparable speeds will cost. My fast reloads will cost about \$6 to \$7.50 per box.

Why should you shoot shells moving at those fast speeds? In ballistics, steel weighs less than lead. So it does not hold speed at far distances like the old lead loads did. To penetrate a duck or goose, the shot must be traveling at least 575 fps when it makes contact. So, the faster it is going at the start, the longer it takes to slow down. Also the

