



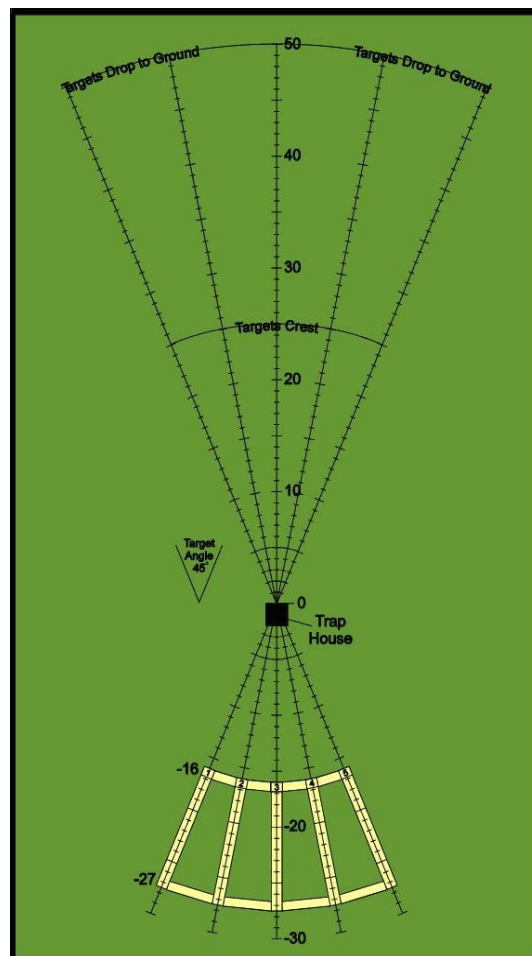
So far in these instructional articles we've covered a lot of ground. From gun fit to lead, to why it's important to pattern your gun. This month we're going to take a pass at a subject every shooter, new or experienced, seems to know everything about... where to hold your gun when you call for the bird.

While it might sound funny, or mean, on the instructional traps we see new shooters starting their guns in all sorts of ways. Some will point at the ground behind the house with the stock shouldered but the muzzle below their sight line. Others will hold the muzzle aimed ten or more feet above the house. I've even seen shooters at station three hold their gun level with the roof but ten or fifteen feet right or left of the house. When asked, most often, the new shooter either has no idea why they are doing it that way or, more likely, they saw a video or read an article on the Internet and interpreted it as "that's what I should do".

Trap shooting, unlike other clay games, gives us as shooters a little bit of a cheat. We can start with the gun mounted, our stance and hold locked in. In other games the rules don't allow that and shooters most often will start at the gun ready position when they call for the target. If the rules are going to give us an advantage then we should be good sports and take it, right?

In the illustration at right we see the layout of the trap field, the house from which the birds are launched, and the flight area with the five basic flight paths shown and their lines extended back to the firing points. All the lines intersect at the center point at the front of the house. But Frank, you say, what does that have to do with hold points?

The idea, again within the rules, is to take advantage based on the most severely angled target you will see at a given station. If I am at station one, for example, the hardest target is the one that goes hard to the left. If I am on station five the target thrown hard to the right is most difficult but, conveniently, that right hand target is the straightaway from station one. Looking again at the diagram the sight lines coinciding with the target paths now make more sense. We don't anticipate that we will see the most difficult target, but we prepare for it. I know if I see the hard left bird I am going to have to get after it but if I see the hard right bird, again my straight away from station one, all I have to do is lift my gun from the hold point up to it to make the score.





If we look at the illustration below and to the left, I think it becomes pretty apparent. This view is from behind the trap house and standing at station three. The numbers correspond to the stations, one through five, and these are the hold points that I recommend for novice trap shooters. I also recommend that the shooter who is still early on their development path start their bead even with the front edges of the roof to give themselves the maximum amount of time to identify the bird and which path it is following. A beginner may even want to start the bead just off to the side of the house on stations one and five until they get more of a feel for the bird flight and path they need to take to score those targets.

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A more experienced shooter may want to narrow the hold points so that the imaginary lines intersect on the launcher inside the house. I do this myself and I get very good results, but if you are just starting out I'd go with the hold points shown above. As you develop your skill you'll also develop the methods that work for you. There is no "one size fits all" solution in any of the shooting sports. What works best is learning the fundamentals and then making any minor adjustments that help you create a consistent and repeatable approach that is the same for every target. In clay games the process is what tallies targets on your score sheet.

Remember, that there are NRA Certified Instructors at trap six and seven on every public day who can help you improve your skills and help you discover your personal solution.



See you again soon with another shooting tip, but in the meantime, remember to keep those muzzles pointed to the ground when not on the firing line, and keep those actions open whenever you are not actually shooting.



Safety first, foremost and always! -- Frank

