

## Buy The Book

### The Versatile Shooter

By: Brad Varney

If you own a versatile hunting dog do him a favor and become a versatile shooter. Ask yourself these questions. Can your dog handle all feathered game? When hunting with your dog are you capable of handling all feathered game? Isn't it time you started holding up your end of the team? If your wing shooting is so bad that you are embarrassing your bird dog you need professional help.

#### Dogs and the True Sportsman

The true sportsman will never lend his dog, gun or wife in that order, even to a friend. The rules for hunting with a friend and his bird dog are as follows: Do not give commands to another hunter's dog. Be prepared for a hunting dog to retrieve game to his master, not necessarily to the person who shot it. Do not criticize or make any negative comments about another man's dog. It would be safer to insult his wife.

Even if the master vents displeasure with his dog's performance, never be foolish and think you have permission to verbally degrade his dog. Although I have no proof, I bet more friendships have been ruined by negative comments about dogs than wives.

There is hunting and there is bird hunting. There is wing shooting and there is bird hunting. If you do not employ a bird dog in your hunting or your wing shooting then you are not bird hunting. Hunting or wing shooting without the help of a dog is like apple pie without the apples.

The man who goes bird hunting without a dog is denying himself the ultimate wing shooting experience. Learning how to read the hunting moves or actions of your bird dog is essential if you want to excel in the game fields. Being ready for the unexpected when bird hunting is learned only from many days afield with your two best friends, your dog and your gun.

The best bird dog is a trained dog. Just like the best shooter is a trained shooter. Both have developed their instinctive senses or good method.

#### Chapter 5: The Eyes Have It

You will never shoot better than the quality of information your eyes feed your brain.

The first thing I do with a new student is an eye test. I tell my younger students that at my school the test comes first and there are no wrong answers.

It has been my experience that few people understand eye dominance as it relates to shotguns and wing shooting. If a shooter is right handed and his right eye is his dominant eye or sighting eye he is co-dominant; conversely for left-handed shooters. These are the most prevalent and best eye conditions. If that dominant eye is strongly dominant, it would constitute an ideal wing shooting situation. If you happen to fall into this category you can skip the rest of this chapter.

In shotgun shooting or wing shooting,

the rear sight is the eye. This all important eye must be in a position slightly above the barrel. Simply stated, if you shoot from the right shoulder the right eye must be the rear sight. A situation where the left eye of a right-handed shooter is dominant (vice versa for the lefty) produces a problem called cross dominance. The number one remedy for a true and strong cross dominance problem is having the shooter change shoulders—provided the dominant eye has good vision at normal shooting distance. This works quite well for new shooters especially younger shooters. Some older and longtime rifle shooters can have difficulty switching, and others refuse to even try this option.

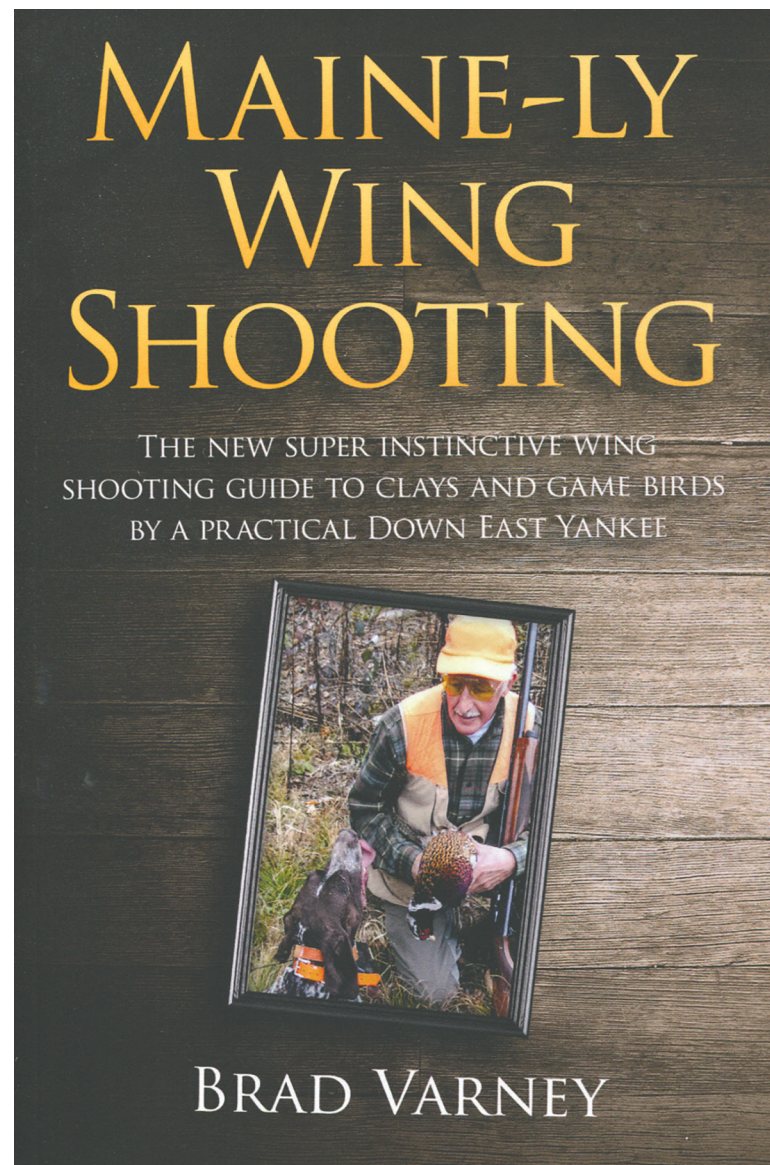
The number two remedy is using some form of vision obliterater. This interrupts the vision of the master or offending eye and forces the eye matching the side the gun is mounted on to function as the so-called rear sight.

What type of eye obliterater? The simple solution is to squint or close the offending eye. Some people cannot close one eye and the ones that can often squint the sighting eye. Anything that impedes the vision of the sighting eye is detrimental to wing shooting. This solution works to some degree at clay birds and to a lesser degree in actual wing shooting. In a real hunting scenario where game birds often disappear behind trees or brush the closed eye may open unintentionally. Couple this with an adrenaline rush when a bird flushes and the odds are against the eye staying closed. Predators—man included—do not hunt with one eye closed.

Closing the offending eye does work but is not 100 percent foolproof. At any point that the sighting eye loses contact with the target the closed eye is tempted to open. Changing focus from target to muzzle may also induce the closed eye to open and take over. Generally, the shooter is unaware of the eye opening. The results of the closed eye or left eye taking over while shooting from the right shoulder, is cross firing or shooting to the left. The opposite will happen if shooting from the left shoulder and trying to correct eye dominance by closing the right eye, this is why I strongly recommend some type of obliterater or patch for the offending eye.

The vision obliterater I use and recommend to eliminate any cross-dominance problems is some form of obstruction on the left lens of right shoulder shooters (vice versa for left shoulder shooters). All shooters should use shooting glasses. A beginner or inexperienced shooter with an inconsistent gun mount requires a larger obstruction. The more consistent the gun mount is the smaller the ob-

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struction needs to be. I generally use a plastic dot. In a pinch, I've used many items to block the offending eye, such as scotch tape, electrical tape, Band-Aid, Vaseline, and even part of a match book. The late author and shooting expert, Bob Brister, applied spit and dust to a student's shooting glasses when other means were not available. On the other side of the coin I know a shooting ophthalmologist who ground a small opaque dot on the inside of his shooting glasses.

More important than the material of the obliterater is where and how to correctly place it. For right handed shooters, with shooting glasses in place, the correct spot is directly between the left or offending eye and front sight when the shotgun is properly mounted to the right shoulder and the right eye is looking directly down the rib or barrel. If the shotgun has a middle bead it should be aligned with the front bead or sight. The left eye may have to be temporarily closed while positioning the stock and right eye. Now with the aid of a helper close the right eye. The left eye will be looking at the left side of the barrel. Focus the left eye on the end of the barrel, right eye still held shut. Next have your helper position a small dime size dot on the outside of the left lens blocking the left eye from seeing the front sight and the end of the barrel. During this procedure keep your head still and virtually glued to the stock.

Now test for correct placement of the dot on your shooting glasses. Choose a small object roughly one

to two inches in diameter as a target and stand approximately 10 feet away from it. With both eyes, open point the gun at the bottom of the target object. Now move the muzzle from your six o'clock hold to a twelve o'clock hold on said object. The object or target should disappear without any head or eye adjustment. Dismount the shotgun and repeat mounting several times. If the target disappears each time the muzzle moves from six to twelve o'clock, the dot is correctly positioned. A larger dot may be necessary if there is inconsistency in the gun mount. The smaller the dot the greater your peripheral vision will be. The smaller the dot the more critical it is positioning it on your glasses. Blocking the center of the offending eye or pupil is the critical element of this procedure.

I had a really nice family group of five shooters: Mom, Dad and three sons, the oldest boy a college student, the next to the oldest in high school and the youngest about eleven. They all had eye dominance issues. I placed dots on everyone's shooting glasses to block the offending eye. The older college boy took his dot off before he ever fired a shot. He said it bothered him and it was in the way. About one half hour into the actual shooting session of the lesson everyone but the older boy was hitting most of the targets from station #7 on the skeet field.

I asked the older boy to let me put the dot back on his glasses but he would have none of the dot "therapy." Finally, in desperation I told him I had something that I knew would help him hit targets and it was not a dot. With the urging of his Dad and the rest of the family he reluctantly agreed.

**Continued on page 5**