



Province of Manitoba

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SHOTGUNS CAN KILL
AT A LONG RANGE

Two hunters faced each other across a marsh -- almost 200 yards apart -- early this season. One man shot at a low flight of ducks and the other man narrowly missed getting killed by buckshot.

The shot lodged in the man's cheekbone and his hand. He became, in that instant, another figure in the provincial Game Branch's annual hunting accident report. Had the shot landed an inch higher he would have been blinded in one eye, or even killed.

This accident was caused because a hunter didn't realize that his shotgun blast has a long range. It wasn't caused by carelessness but by ignorance -- ignorance of the fire power in his control.

Hunters are urged repeatedly not to try for ducks that are more than 50 yards away. The effective killing range of a shotgun is about that distance ... but the dangerous range is considerably more. For example, No. 7½ shot carries, and is dangerous to humans, for 125 yards; No. 6 shot is dangerous for 250 yards; 3 and 4 shot are dangerous for 300 yards and BB shot is dangerous for 450 yards.

The heavy shot used for geese is dangerous for 1,400 yards -- almost a mile. A Winnipeg ballistics engineer says that heavy shot for geese is the same weight and travels at the same velocity as a .22 calibre bullet.

A heavy goose shot, fired without careful aim and caution, is the same as a dozen .22 bullets scattering over the countryside for a

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mile. This means that hunters must be extra careful. They should check to see that they have a clear range for the danger distance of the shot. In heavy country, or marshes where there are many hunters, a man must be extremely careful that his stray buckshot doesn't wound or kill a fellow hunter.

Our ballistics expert says that a shotgun fired at close range is the most lethal firearm of the whole lot used by hunters. For example if you hung a Winnipeg telephone directory against a solid background like a fence and fired No. 4 shot at it from a distance of 40 yards the shot would go right through the book. BB shot would probably drive the book through the fence.

Here's another example of a shotgun's power. A blast fired at three feet against a three-inch piece of solid, bone-dry maple lumber would knock a hole in it big enough for a man's arm.

Another hazard that fortunately is not too common is the one of putting the wrong size shell in your gun. For example, a 16-gauge shell in a 10-gauge gun is an almost sure way to get killed. The smaller gauge shell slides right into the barrel of the large gun and lodges against the "lead". The hunter pulls the trigger, there's no result and in his rush to shoot the fleeing birds he jams in another shell, this time the right gauge. When he pulls the trigger both shells explode.

The same kind of explosion can be caused when a 20-gauge shell is put into a 12-gauge gun, or when a 28-gauge shell gets into a 16-gauge gun. Any shell put into a gun two gauges bigger can cause an explosion that can kill the hunter.

Shells that are only one gauge away, for example a 16-gauge shell in a 12-gauge gun, are not as likely to cause an explosion. But at the same time it doesn't produce a very efficient shot. And it does create a smaller danger. The whole 16-gauge shell is likely to expand and distort in the chamber. Sometimes part of it lodges in the barrel and if another shot is fired against an obstruction in the barrel it could mean an accident.

Hon. C. H. Witney, minister of mines and natural resources, said Friday that any man who takes out a gun to kill ducks immediately assumes the responsibility of another man's life. Hunters must be more than just careful -- they must be extra careful. A moment's lapse in judgment or one incautious move and another hunter can be killed.

This responsibility is one that shouldn't be regarded lightly, Mr. Witney said.