

12 OR 20 FOR ONE OUNCE LOADS

Dear Technoid,

First off, I find your articles excellent and very informative. I only discovered the pleasures of the clay sports last year and I am really enjoying them immensely. Your articles certainly help.

My question is why is a 12 ga with say an 1 oz load better than a 20 ga with the same 1 oz load? Better is relative I guess, so to be more specific, could you explain the differences, better or worse?

Thank You in advance,

Steve

Dear Steve,

I'll make this quick because it's the kind of topic that could go on forever.

1 oz in a 12 beats 1 oz in a 20 because the patterns will be generally better. When the primer detonates and the powder ignites, the shotcup containing the pellets is pushed violently forward. The pellets at the front of the shotcup actually crush some of the pellets at the rear of the shotcup. Crushed pellets don't fly straight and escape the pattern. A 12 ga 1 oz load crushes fewer pellets than a 20 ga 1 oz load because the 12 gauge has a shorter, wider shot column due to its larger bore. There are other ballistic differences, such as pressures and the like, but pellet setback is the main thing.

1 oz in a 20 beats 1 oz in a 12 because the 20 gauge gun is generally lighter. If you are hunting in a field, a lower gun weight means a longer period of effective hunting because you are less fatigued. But that's in the field, not at clays.

The 12 and 20 tie in weight for clay shooting. Many clay shooters prefer a heavier gun because it is steadier and helps the follow through. The 12 wins here. For those who prefer a lighter, livelier gun for clays, the 20 wins.

Bottom line: Unless you have a very specific reason to shoot a 20 at clays, pick a 12. Just about everyone does. It is more forgiving due to its weight, lower recoil due to its weight and has a better pattern. Only in the field where weight is an issue, does the 20 have some advantages.

On a more personal note, it is very easy to find a one ounce load that patterns well in a 12. 20s can be far more picky. I've found a few one ounce loads that did well in a few of my 20 gauge guns, but got nailed by just as many that performed poorly. The 20 gauge is a pickier gun than many realize.

Best regards,
Bruce Buck
Shotgun Report's Technoid