

## About Buckshot

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In this newsletter, we will discuss what separates Stars & Stripes Ammunition's buckshot from regular factory buckshot. We will also discuss what makes a superior buckshot load, what shot sizes apply to your hunting, effective range of buckshot, and proper shell length to use.

Most people familiar with shotguns know what buckshot is, but for those not knowing, it is large caliber shot intended for use in shotguns. Birdshot, in comparison to buckshot, is small caliber shot used entirely for bird hunting and small game hunting. Birdshot is never much larger than 1/8 inch in diameter and is more or less harmless to targets beyond 100 yards. Buckshot is most commonly used for close range big game hunting where a moving target, or a target that is in heavy brush may be encountered. Buckshot allows the possibility of multiple hits on the target, increasing the probability of bringing it down.

Buckshot is also used in combat/defensive shotgun ammunition. Shotguns loaded with buckshot give the shooter unequalled power in close quarters combat/personal defense. Buckshot in this application is like unleashing a handful of pistol caliber bullets with a single squeeze of the trigger. Hits with this ammunition are devastating at very close range as found in the rooms of a house and are capable of taking out even the most juiced up attacker. Combat/defensive shotgun ammo will be covered in brief only, for more information about this type of shotgun ammo see our newsletter "About Combat/Defensive Shotgun Ammo" listed on the Stars & Stripes Ammunition website, in the Ammo Education section.

If you are unsure about the correct application of buckshot for your gauge caliber and hunting situation, just let us know. We'll be glad to help you make a selection which meets your needs.

Buckshot comes in a multitude of sizes; B, BB, BBB, T, F, 4, 3, 2, 1, 0, 00, 000, and 0000. B is the smallest buckshot size and 0000 is the largest. Size identification and application will be covered on page 9 of this newsletter.

Buckshot works through multiple impact trauma of the target. While a single large buck pellet can be lethal in the right place, multiple pellet hits are what make buckshot work. When a target is moving fast, often obscured by underbrush, and aiming can't be accomplished to a great degree of accuracy is where buckshot loads shine.

Anyone who has fired a factory buckshot load knows one thing; they got hit pretty hard in the shoulder and cheek when they squeezed the trigger. Brutal recoil is always associated with buckshot loads. But a Stars & Stripes Ammo buckshot load will never batter you the way factory buckshot loads do, and they will pattern more uniformly for the use you specified, and be more lethal.

Buckshot loads require special components and knowledge, and a lot of practice experience to produce loads which stand out from factory type offerings. Stars & Stripes Ammunition does not ride on the band wagon of old style loadings using overly heavy shot charges, loaded using 50+ year old technology.

Stars & Stripes Ammunition assembles well balanced buckshot loads which are more effective through higher velocity and more efficient patterning. Our loads are engineered as buckshot loads first, and nothing else, so we can put our knowledge and modern technology to best use to deliver a load the likes of which you have never fired! We call them Super Buck.

Factory buckshot comes in three loadings; low recoil, standard, and magnum. Low recoil buckshot loads are just low velocity loadings. This is the factory way of taming the recoil monster and keeping ammo cheap, but it severely compromises the effectiveness of the load. Standard loads are regular 2-3/4 inch shell lengths at normal velocity. Magnum loadings can be in 2-3/4 inch as well as 3 inch and 3-1/2 inch in 12ga and 10ga. Magnum loads only carry more shot, they seldom have any higher velocity than standard loads. We make our Super Buck buckshot loads with the exact opposite thinking of factory buckshot loadings; we turn up the velocity and lower the shot weight/pellet count to what works best to make a well balanced efficient load.

Most people ask why we lower shot weight/pellet counts. Doesn't this reduce the effectiveness of the load? Absolutely not! Factory buckshot may have a few extra pellets in it, but it is an attempt to get more pellets into the pattern, but you will notice that the patterns seldom ever look clean and uniform. Now imagine that raggedy pattern with reduced velocity. Think either is a great load? Well they might put meat on the table, but they might leave you chasing wounded game through the sticks too, or worse if you were using the low recoil load for a defensive/combat load to protect body and home.

A superior buckshot load is one that combines 4 aspects into the load; low recoil, high velocity, consistent and uniform patterning for the desired range of use, and clean positive functioning. Factory ammo usually has at least one of these aspects. Rarely more than two. Stars & Stripes Ammunition buckshot loads combine all 4 aspects into our buckshot ammunition.

Factory buckshot loads are made to be one thing above all others; cheap. It isn't that the major factory brands do not want to make great ammo, just that the economics of producing millions of rounds of ammo prevents it. Custom buckshot does cost more than factory ammo, but you get what you pay for. If you are looking for something special in the way of buckshot, then you have come to the right website! Here is what makes our Super Buck buckshot stand above the rest.

## **BUCKSHOT LOAD COMPONENTS**

The heart of our Super Buck loads are the buckshot pellets. We use only hardened alloyed lead for our buckshot. Our pellets are cold swaged for unprecedented roundness and uniformity in size and weight. Hard alloyed pellets resist deformation during the violent payload setback during the firing cycle and flight through the barrel. Their roundness, uniform size and weight make them fly true to the target with less chaotic dispersal resulting in uniform patterns. Hard alloyed pellets penetrate much deeper once they reach the target for unmatched terminal advantage over soft cast/swaged pure lead pellets used in factory ammunition.

Through the use of various specialized and advanced wad designs, we can tune a Super Buck load to your exact needs. Waddings in shotgun ammo are what separate the shot from the propellant. Wads also serve other functions and are under incredible stress when a shotshell is fired. The wad connects the driving force of the rapidly expanding propellant gases to the shot column. Our wads have three functions; A super efficient gas seal, recoil reducing inertial damper, and a pattern enhancing shotcup.

Our gas seal is designed to handle the large volume bulky propellants and spacious hulls required to create a superior buckshot load. Our gas seals are a domed skirted design which seals any bore, regardless of throat shape or oversize bore condition. The domed shape also facilitates a more efficient and complete burn cycle. The seal creates a perfect gas seal to the barrel, allowing very high velocity in almost all weather conditions and complete propellant burn for less residual ash. Interrupted burn cycle is the number one cause of load failure in shotguns, and is at its worst in weather colder than 40 degrees Fahrenheit. A compromised, or inappropriate gas seal is the culprit 99% of the time.

Most factory ammo uses a plastic gas seal of some kind, most work OK as they are the flat gasket type, not the specialized skirt seals used by Stars & Stripes Ammunition which positively seals any bore. Some cheaper brands and imported ammo may use older nitro card natural fiber gas seals. Nitro cards are an inferior seal material for any high velocity or heavy shot charge loading.

The inertial damper in the middle of the wad column reduces felt recoil by spreading out the recoil impulse over a longer duration of time and enhances velocity by allowing the buckshot pellets to be accelerated smoothly and progressively through the barrel without interrupting the propellant burn cycle. The inertial damper must also keep the gas seal from tipping during the firing cycle which will compromise the burn cycle, and support the G forces of pellet setback on the shotcup.

Factory buckshot loads do not use an advanced inertial damper. Instead, factory ammo uses a fiber card wad to separate the shot charge from the gas seal. These cards are made of hard natural fiber and have little recoil damping ability. This is one of the reasons factory buckshot loads develop such harsh recoil. The jolting sudden shot charge acceleration produced by this wad when the shotgun is fired deforms the pellets and ruins any possibility of a uniform or consistent pattern.

Shotcups hold and guide the shot column during the firing cycle, protecting the shot from the barrel and helping to modify the shot pattern. A shotcup can range from a flat petalless platform to having thick petals the full length of the shot column. The number of petals and the length of the petal cuts on the shotcup fine tune the shot dispersal after the shot charge exits the barrel. The shotcup must bear the entire force of accelerating the shot charge from a dead rest to full velocity in just a few inches of travel, so they have to be tough yet flexible enough to clear the shot charge cleanly after exiting the barrel, even in sub-freezing temperatures.

Flat petalless shotcup platforms allow more pellet scrubbing on the barrel and less constriction of the shot column resulting in a pattern which opens up more quickly. These wads are best for close range use.

As the shotcup becomes taller and thicker, it isolates the shot from the effects of barrel scrubbing and increases constriction making the pattern more dense and slower opening. These wads are best for long range use, or where concentrated patterns are desired at close range.

Somewhere in the middle is where everything else falls and we could eat up a lot of pages describing every single wad we use in our Super Buck buckshot ammo. Count on us to have something which applies to your needs!

Factory buckshot does not use any type of shotcup for pattern control. Shot is open to the bore and resting on fiber card base wads. Some factory buckshot will use buffering compound to aid in improving patterns.

Buffer is an optional component of a buckshot load. It isn't required in all loads, but certainly aids in reducing pellet deformation upon shot charge setback during the firing cycle. Buffer is a light fluff material which fills up all the interstice, or open space, between the pellets within the shotshell. Large pellets have a lot of open space in the load with a limited number of contact points between other pellets. When accelerated, the pellets resist acceleration and set back against the other pellets and the base of the wad. The forces are incredible and even hard alloyed pellets will suffer some deformation when unbuffered. The buffer supports the weight of the shot, virtually eliminating deformation in hard alloyed pellets, and drastically reducing it in soft lead pellets. Buffer is essential for long range buckshot loads. Stars & Stripes Ammunition only adds buffer material to those loads used for long range, or where dense close range patterns are desired.

We use specialized propellants which are best suited for high velocity buckshot loads. Our propellants deliver less muzzle blast than conventional buckshot. This is important for buckshot loads as they are frequently fired in short barreled shotguns where muzzle blast is most intense. Muzzle blast is a key factor to shooter comfort and how your body perceives recoil. These propellants are also modern, super clean burning in nature, and have great cold and warm weather performance.

Factory buckshot loads are loaded with that propellant which produces the most uniform internal ballistics over a broad range of conditions for the load produced. The criteria for a factory selecting these propellants is driven more by economics than by that which absolutely works best. Saving a few pennies per round produced adds up over millions of rounds. So even if powder A is the best, powder B will get the nod if it costs less and still delivers acceptable results.

All of this is nothing without the hull, or shell, to hold it all together. We use only NEW modern Fiocchi Riefenhauser design hulls for our Super Buck loads. Riefenhauser type hulls are spacious in internal volume, allowing plenty of room for all the bulky components of a buckshot load. These hulls have water proofed primers and are roll crimped shut for a classic look and superior performance. Roll crimps are harder to apply, but they deliver more consistent shotshell performance than the star, or fold crimp. Our primary hulls are made by Fiocchi and 99% of our loads will use this brand. Where Fiocchi hulls aren't applicable, we use that brand which is best suited for the application.

Factory buckshot always uses the hulls made by that producing company. None of the factory hulls are junk, but by design some are better suited for other types of shotshell loadings, and not all of them accept a roll crimp cleanly as the star crimp is now the standard hull closure for ammo being made on high speed automated equipment. Something to be aware of if purchasing custom buckshot by another company is to be sure they are using a hull which is suitable for a buckshot load to begin with, it is critically important to overall load performance.

So now you know what goes into a superior load and the difference between Stars & Stripes Ammunition's Super Buck and factory buckshot. Let's concentrate a little more on the buckshot itself. As mentioned previously B, BB, BBB, T, F, 4, 3, 2, 1, 0, 00, 000, and 0000 are the Super Buck sizes available from Stars & Stripes Ammunition. BB, 4, 00, and 000 are the most common sizes found in factory type buckshot. B through F buckshot is considered small caliber buck, and #4 through #0000 is large caliber buck. The next few pages will discuss pellet size and fit in your gauge caliber, effective range, chokes, and shell lengths.

### **EFFECTIVE RANGE**

Small caliber buckshot in the right gauge caliber with the correct choke for the shot size and metal type can be effective beyond 60 yards on waterfowl. Large caliber buckshot is generally effective to about 35 yards for big game hunting and defensive/combat use. Large caliber Super Buck can be effective out to 50 yards, or more, under ideal conditions in a gauge caliber large enough to give good pellet count and load efficiency, but pattern coverage of the target becomes a problem due to low pellet count with large caliber buckshot. All buckshot pellets carry lethal energy beyond 50 yards, but the likelihood of multiple hits on the target become less probable as range increases. Hits that bag cleanly beyond 50 yards on big game are highly unlikely and these long shots should be avoided.

Any shotshell under 20ga is going to be extremely limited in effective range when loaded with any large shot. Such diminutive calibers like 28 gauge through 410 Bore are best served as personal defense weapons at best when loaded with buckshot. While you may

be able to get a dozen #B shot into a 3 inch 410 shell, the quality of that load is poor, and poorer yet will be the pattern and pattern coverage. Many people insist on using the small gauge calibers for hunting outside the class capabilities they were intended for, but it is not advisable. There are better gauge calibers for big game hunting and long range waterfowling. Even 20ga and 16ga have pattern problems with #B shot due to its size in relation to bore diameter and appropriate shot charge to give good pellet count in the pattern.

Keep in mind that buckshot works through the probability of multiple hits on the target, so if 35 to 50 yard range is going to be a factor, consider some options for your ammo and hunting if you are using a small caliber shotgun. You will be better off moving up to a larger bore size to reap the benefits of greater load efficiency and the ability to launch more of a larger pellet if hunting big game with any gauge caliber under 20ga.

If your conditions don't allow shots under 35 yards the best option is to go in the opposite direction of normal thinking and use the smallest pellets suitable for your game size and use a maximum velocity magnum loading designed for long range. The additional pellets will increase pattern coverage, and 2 or more hits with those smaller pellets will be more likely to produce the end results you want, a situation which is probably going to be better than a single hit from a larger pellet. Smaller sized large caliber pellets like #4, #3, and #2 size make outstanding long range big game loads in the larger gauge calibers with 3 inch shell lengths due to very dense pellet counts in the pattern and higher velocity.

With custom buckshot loads, effective range can be manipulated through various types of wads and buffering of the load. We encourage customers to use loads designed for their requirements to get the best results.

## **CHOKE**

Chokes are designed to modify the shot pattern by squeezing the shot column together to a predetermined amount of compression before the shot leaves the barrel, slowing the outward dispersal of the shot.

Chokes are located in the last few inches of your barrel, or are interchangeable threaded inserts as found in modern barrels. Essentially, the choke compresses the shot column by tapering down to a smaller size than your true bore diameter, squeezing the shot together as it passes through this constriction. There are now four different metals which shot can be made from. Almost all buckshot is made from lead, so we will explain choking as it applies to lead shot. In general, more open chokes work best with steel and Hevi-Shot. Chokes also have the most effect on shot charges using fine birdshot, so we aren't going to list much in the way of effective range for chokes in regards to buckshot except to where it applies to small caliber buck.

Choking of a shotgun barrel presents certain problems for buckshot, and is another area of hunting with buckshot which causes great confusion. Most people gravitate to full choke thinking this choke will deliver the tightest patterns, and is the advice most commonly found on the packaging for factory type buckshot.

Quite the opposite is true, more open chokes like Improved Cylinder or Skeet almost always work best, especially for pellet sizes over #4 buck. Long range waterfowling, or pest control, requires small caliber pellets size, and more constrictive chokes for tighter patterns than can be used for large pellets and big game hunting.

Like people, all shotguns are different and it is advisable to do pattern testing to verify how your particular firearm is going to shoot with your load and at the range you intend to use it at. What worked best in our test shotguns may not hold any merit for your application, so get to the range and do some patterning.

Chokes found in shotguns from least constrictive to most constrictive are; Cylinder(Cyl.), Skeet Cylinder(Skeet Cyl.), Improved Cylinder(Imp. Cyl.), Improved Modified(Imp. Mod.), Modified(Mod), Modified Full(Mod. Full), Full, Extra Full(aka Turkey).

Cylinder choke is a barrel without any constriction, it is true bore diameter from chamber end to muzzle. This choke, or lack of, is OK for all large shot in any gauge and will produce the most rapidly opening patterns. This choke would be unsuitable for the small caliber buckshot used for waterfowling as it will not produce a tight enough pattern for any shot beyond 30 yards. Patterns with Cylinder choke are often erratic due to no compression of the shot column.

Skeet Cylinder choke has just a slight amount of constriction and is designed for rapidly opening patterns needed for skeet competition. Skeet Cyl. isn't normally found in hunting applications, but can be used for this role. This choke is OK for all large shot and will produce the rapidly opening patterns. This choke would be unsuitable for the small caliber buckshot used for waterfowling as it will not produce a tight enough pattern for any shot beyond 35 yards. This choke would be slightly more desirable than Cylinder.

Improved Cylinder is the choke which has the best benefit for large caliber buckshot. This choke size has a few thousandths of an inch of compression and has the best effect on large caliber shot patterns by pressing the shot column together just enough to give a uniform pattern, yet not enough to deform the shot in any way, or create a conflict between pellets trying to fit through the choke as happens with tighter chokes. This choke would be unsuitable for the small caliber buckshot used for waterfowling as it will not produce a tight enough pattern for any shot beyond 40 yards.

Improved Modified choke can produce desirable long range patterns when used with a buffered buckshot load using a full length shotcup by creating just a little more shot charge compression than Imp. Cyl. without creating too much shot deformation. Imp. Mod. holds the most promise for long range patterns and some experimental patterning may need to be done to find out if this choke holds merit for your shotgun and range of use. This choke could be suitable for close in pest, turkey, and waterfowl hunting where ranges may be 35-45 yards when using a heavy walled full length shotcup.

Modified choke is a middle ground choke but is getting too restrictive for large caliber buckshot. Even when a buckshot load uses a full length shotcup with thin petals, patterns are often erratic due to excessive pellet deformation as they pass through the choke. This

choke in 12ga and larger with small caliber buckshot can create usable patterns out to 40-45 yards when using a heavy walled full length shotcup.

Modified Full choke is entering into the realm of unusable choke for large caliber buckshot. Even when using thin walled full length shotcups, large caliber buckshot has difficulty fitting through this choke, especially in gauge calibers smaller than 12ga. When used with small caliber buck and heavier shotcups this choke can make effective 45-50 yard patterns.

Full choke is the most constrictive choke that can be safely used with large caliber buckshot. Although often labeled as the most desired choke to use on factory buckshot packaging, in reality it is the worst. Even when using the thinnest full length shotcup, this choke will deform the buck pellets so much as to create random erratic patterns. It will create dense patterns initially, but the pattern quickly degrades from the chaotic dispersal of unround shot pellets. Never the less, many customers do report great results with Full Choke, but as mentioned before, pattern testing is essential. With small caliber buckshot, a buffered load, and the right shotcup thickness/design, Full choke can deliver 55+ yard performance in 12ga and larger.

Extra Full, or Turkey choke, is the most constrictive choke. It is not recommended to fire any large caliber buckshot through this choke. Shot deformation will be extreme, and it can cause a pressure spike which under certain circumstances could be unsafe. Extra Full choke will deliver patterns with a super dense core with a broad fringe pattern and are desired for placing large amounts of focused small caliber shot on a still ground based target, like a turkey or pest species, at ranges going past 50 yards.

If using a 10 ga or larger, any choke can be used with any shot size with good results, but even in the big 8 and 10 bore, the large caliber buckshot will perform better in an open choke. Twelve gauge and smaller bore sizes have problems passing buckshot size pellets through full choked barrels, resulting in ruined patterns. The problem is magnified and progresses to less constrictive chokes as bore size decreases. If you don't have the ability to go do pattern testing, try to stick with a choke no more constrictive than Improved Cylinder.

Full choke causes more 'Flyer' pellets and ragged looking patterns because the large caliber shot cannot easily situate itself in relation to the other pellets in the load to flow through the choke efficiently. When large caliber pellets hit the choke, it is like rush hour in downtown Los Angeles and something has to give. With lead shot it is the roundness of the pellets as they ram through the choke and are literally crushed together. With Bismuth shot, pellets can fracture, leading to poor patterns. And steel and Hevi-Shot encompass a whole new set of variables called chaotic resonance dispersal being they are so hard and can't compress while passing through a choke. The pellets act like billiard balls after exiting the barrel, only there is a massive swarm of them. Once released from the barrel these pellets spring apart from being pressed together by the choke and payload setback creating a chaotic pattern which is never the same from shot to shot. Steel and Hevi-Shot pattern best in the least restrictive chokes.

Once upon a time, external variable chokes were popular, and many older shotguns are equipped with these twist type variable chokes. Poly Choke was the major manufacturer of this style choke. The Poly Choke uses a collet with fingers to compress the shot charge before it exits the choke. Set your Poly Choke, or similar collet style variable choke, to Cylinder, or Improved Cylinder if there is no Cylinder setting. Under no circumstances should you fire large caliber buck through any adjustable constriction tighter than Imp. Cyl. You run the risk of possibly causing damage to the choke device by using the more constrictive settings with large caliber buck. Do not confuse a Poly Choke with the modern interchangeable choke inserts.

### **SHELL LENGTH**

Shell length is only a minor concern for most people. Standard shell lengths are 2-3/4 inch, 3 inch, and 3-1/2 inch. Other shell lengths exist, and we do make buckshot loads for those lengths as well.

If the shell length is suitable for your chamber, you can use it even if it is shorter than the chamber. We have found that the shell length which fills the entire length of your chamber will most often produce the best patterns being the shot doesn't have to jump unsupported from the shell mouth to the barrel forcing cone. Longer shell lengths also allow higher velocities with equal weight shot charges. Under no circumstances should you use a shell length longer than the markings on your shotgun!

Our Super Buck loads in longer magnum shell lengths are loaded to higher velocity, not larger pellet counts/payload weights as is done with factory buckshot. The added pellets are negligible to the count and don't add anything but weight to the load, where higher velocity of a lighter loads increases the lethality of the pellets already in the load/pattern. The exception here is the 12 gauge 3-1/2 inch super magnum which easily accommodates more pellets and can launch them at equal velocity to the shorter 12 gauge shell lengths.

### **PELLET SIZE AND SELECTION**

Now we come to the most confusing part to using buckshot; selecting the correct pellet size. More often than not, people choose a pellet far too large for the task at hand and even with a custom buckshot load they end up with mediocre performance by using too large of a pellet. In the end, choice of shot size will largely be personal preference for your hunting application, but try to avoid overly large shot if you are hunting smaller big game like deer. The quality of your load will increase, and so will your effectiveness if you go down a few sizes from the ever popular #00 buck loads so commonly used.

Pellet size selection is critical to overall fit and pattern performance for any particular gauge caliber. The larger your bore size, the better the larger pellets will perform. The larger bore size allows the pellets to adjust and situate themselves during the firing cycle and flight through the barrel (Picture a funnel and you pour some things through it; fine grained sand and a small aggregate. Which flows through easier? Now imagine all this sped up to 1,400 feet per second velocity). They will also fit better in a larger gauge hull.

Our Super Buck loads contain a reasonable pellet count in relation to a light to medium payload weight. Light shot charges can be driven to higher velocities with less recoil, and

put less stress on the payload. Velocity is a critical factor to pellet lethality. Faster moving buckshot is faster at all ranges, resulting in more downrange killing ability. These loads are more controllable, pattern better, and are far more pleasant to shoot. Efficient light loads are far more effective than many people believe through better patterning. These better patterns result in a higher probability of multiple hits on the target.

Heavy weight shot charges increase recoil and reduce payload velocity. Heavy shot charges also create more dynamic stress on the entire shot column resulting in more shot deformation, greater likelihood of a wad failure, and poorer patterns requiring more pellets to compensate for the pattern degradation. Controllability and shooter comfort are also severely compromised. Lower velocity also decreases effective range and pellet lethality.

Buckshot has an unbelievable amount of penetrating power for its size and weight. And while intended for short range, these pellets can be lethal and damaging to property beyond 400 yards! In populated areas you should never use a pellet any larger than will get the job done at the desired range you expect to shoot at. When used for defensive and combat purposes, large caliber buckshot can and does over penetrate human targets, furniture, walls, and can even end up piercing the outer walls of a house only to end up doing harm to persons in other rooms of the house, or in the streets or homes nearby.

Think of a buckshot pellet as a single rifle projectile. Within reason, if a high power rifle bullet of equivalent bullet size to your buckshot selection can be used to take the same game, then you are good to go with your buckshot selection. Keep in mind that 24 caliber rifles for deer hunting are fairly popular in some areas, 24 caliber equates to the smallest buck pellet suitable for deer hunting; #4 buck. A 24 caliber rifle delivers vastly more energy to a specific aim point, but this is why we need multiple hits with buckshot to be effective. As game animals become larger than deer, pellet size selection becomes increasingly critical and only the largest sizes will work.

Sizes #B through #F are essentially for large waterfowl, turkey, varmints, and personal defense/combat shotgun ammo. Used in the larger gauges with the appropriate choke for the shot material and size, these pellet sizes make 60+ yard shots possible. These pellets are also best for very poor hunting conditions like extremely cold temperature and high wind. Cold weather causes velocities to drop off, and wind effects pellet trajectory. B through F have enough mass to carry lethal energy at lower velocity to long range small targets, and are less effected by wind drift than smaller birdshot pellets. With waterfowl, all it takes is one hit to bring the bird down, and if not dead immediately, a meeting with the ground after falling 40+ yards will do the rest for you. These sizes also apply to turkey and larger pest species where a dense pattern of large pellets are needed.

#4 through #0000 are for big game and personal defense/combat use. Within this category, #4 through #1 buck are suitable for game up to deer sized and defensive/combat use. Number 0 to #0000 are suitable for just about any big game. The pellet selected should be based on your game size, expected range for use, and the gauge caliber of your shotgun. Number 4 through #0000 buck are too large to be making aerial shots at fowl,

and pattern coverage would be so poor that you would be more likely to miss the target than hit it. The exception would be Pterodactyls, but if you are seeing those, you might want to put your shotgun away and go inside for the rest of the day!

B class shot/buckshot is #B, #BB, and #BBB. Pellet diameters are 0.17", 0.18", and 0.19". Pellet weight ranges from 8 to 10 grains with lead and Hevi-Shot, steel and Bismuth being 40% and 15% lighter respectively. This shot is available in lead, steel, Bismuth, and Hevi-Shot(Tungsten) and serves well as a heavy waterfowl, turkey, pest species shot. This shot size is too large for effective long range patterns in gauge calibers smaller than 12ga. It does make nice defensive/combat loads in all gauges where lowered penetration characteristics are desired, or in smaller gauges used for close range hunting of the above typed game. Random pellet counts will occur in all gauge calibers over 20 gauge. Depending on the gauge caliber, anywhere from 12 to 26 pellets can be fit into gauge calibers smaller than 20.

#T buck is 0.20" in diameter and 13 grains in weight. This shot is available in lead and steel. This pellet size is ideal for long range bad weather hunting for waterfowl in 10 gauge. It can also be used for turkey, pest species and defensive/combat ammo. Range must be kept very close for smaller gauges due to low pellet count. Pellet counts are random in any bore size larger than 20ga. Anywhere from 10 to 20 pellets can be loaded in gauge calibers under 20 gauge.

#F buck is 0.22" in diameter and 16 grains in weight. Available in lead and steel. This is also another long range waterfowl or turkey shot for use in 10 gauge. Range of use and application are similar to #T.

#4 buck is 0.24" in diameter and 20.5 grains in weight. This is the smallest size shot suitable for deer hunting. Due to its small size, shots should be limited to under 35 yards in the 20ga. Fit of this pellet makes it one of 2 choices for use in the 20 gauge on game up to deer size. Do not attempt to hunt anything larger than deer with this pellet size. Effective range can be surprising, especially in the larger gauge calibers where you can unleash a dense swarm of pellets at the target, also great for fast moving close range targets where a fast opening pattern with good pattern coverage is required. Pellet counts can range from 14 to 50 pellets depending on gauge caliber and payload weight.

#3 buck is 0.26" in diameter and weighs in at 23.5 grains. This is one of the most overlooked pellet sizes available. Performance and application are very similar to #4. It is ideal for deer sized game in the 20 gauge, and yields dense pattern coverage at longer ranges in gauge calibers over 16 gauge, also great for fast moving close range targets where a fast opening pattern with good pattern coverage is required. Pellet counts will vary from 12 to 40 pellets depending on gauge and payload weight.

#2 buck is 0.27" in diameter and 29 grains in weight. This gauge is suitable for 16 gauge and up for big game, and superb for delivering dense long range patterns in the 12 and 10 gauges. Pellet counts will range from 12 to 36 pellets depending on gauge caliber and payload weight.

#1 buck is 0.30" in diameter and weighs in at 40 grains. This is another of the more overlooked sizes of buckshot. This size is large enough for deep penetration and is truly suitable for big game nearing the larger end of the spectrum. Due to its size, it is a tight fit for efficient use in the 16ga, but it works OK. This size is best suited for 12 gauge and larger, with pellet counts from 9 to 28 pellets depending on gauge and payload weight.

#0 buck is 0.32" in diameter and weighs 48 grains. This is another overlooked buck size and has amazing striking power and fit in the 12 and 10 gauge. This pellet size is truly capable of taking game larger than deer at very close range. Pellet counts will be 9 to 20 pellets depending on gauge caliber and payload weight.

#00 buck is 0.34" in diameter and 54 grains in weight. This is the most common buckshot size. This is the original buckshot size adopted by the US Postal Service for protection of the mail in the old west, in 10 gauge of course. 00 buck is an outstanding max performance defensive/combat load for the 12ga. Over penetration is common place for the #00 at close range. This pellet size can be used for any big game. Pellet counts of 8 to 20 pellets can be had depending on gauge and payload weight. This pellet size is too large for efficient use in anything smaller than 12 gauge. When used in higher pellet count 12ga 3-1/2 inch and 10 gauge loads, this size can be an effective long range load.

#000 buck is 0.36" and weighs 70 grains. This pellet size is effective for larger big game. This size is the largest pellet that fits well in the 12 gauge. Pellet count is from 6 to 18 pellets depending on gauge and payload weight. This can be an effective long range load for the 10ga. due to good pellet count in the pattern.

#0000 buck is 0.38" in diameter and weighs in at 85 grains. This pellet has low count and poor fit in a 12ga application, but makes a crushing close range defensive/combat load. When used in the 10ga, pellets counts are up to 16 and effective at longer range. #0000 is suitable for any North American sized big game.

Deer hunting is about the most common hunting done with buckshot. Our favorite buck sizes for deer hunting are #1 and #0 in 12ga and 10ga. These sizes allow a 12 pellet load in 12ga and very high velocity in a 3 inch shell. Pattern coverage is reasonably good beyond 35 yards, and these buck sizes carry a lot of penetration power. These two sizes fit very well into the 12ga bore size, so patterns will be uniform and 12ga is what most people are hunting with.

If you have questions about load selection, don't hesitate to ask us. Good hunting!

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