

## Cleaning

People, people, people! What am I going to do with you? You buy these great guns, often for more than what two month's beer money comes to and then when they stop working after only 4-5,000 rounds of \$100/case ammo, you get all whiny! Sometimes you send them in and I have to get the crud out of them - which most of the time is all they really wanted - just a little TLC. I decided, while trying to get the black stuff out of the creases of my hands this weekend, having just removed 15 paper towels and 20 patches worth of stuff from one of these poor pistols, that it was time for another note. So, first let us dispel one of the more persistent misconceptions floating around: A dirty gun is NOT a more accurate or a more reliable gun! It is NOT the best idea to "shoot 'em until they jam!" Just as you brush your teeth (hopefully for all around you) and bathe and change the oil in your Miata, you need to clean your gun!

When I was shooting with the All Army Reserve Gold Team, occasionally Col. Jack would ask us to shoot a 2700 along with the 5 international events. We were all shooting in the 880s with the .45 and most used the .45 in both CF and the .45 matches. I always broke my .45 down and cleaned it between the CF and .45 matches! No malfunctions, thank you, and superb accuracy from this match fitted gun. Too much? I didn't and still don't think so. Just depends on how serious you are about the sport. I always started a match with a clean gun or one with no more than 10 rounds of "sight ins" through it. Well, hoping this convinces you to follow the righteous path, lets go through what is recommended.

Air Guns: If there is any gun that can be semi-neglected it is the air pistol. (Top air rifle shooters are as anal as anything described above, but pistol shooters can take it a bit easier.) I have seen air pistols with several thousand rounds through them without cleaning pull out an almost white patch the first pass. On the other hand, one of the top lady US Champions of a few years ago had a Walther CP2 that had to be cleaned every 200 rounds if it was to group at all. But her air gun was the exception. Their low velocity, excellent finish on the barrels and the lack of powder residues make air pistols almost carefree. For these, I recommend a nylon pull-through loop (doubled and crimped .040" trimmer cord) and a .22 cloth patch (1 1/4" diameter) and a spritz of TSI-301 about every couple of cans of pellets. Feed the loop down the bore from the muzzle, fold the patch in half, put into the loop, spritz and pull through. A couple will probably be enough. Then, take a Q-tip and wipe all around the pellet loading area (small bits of lead are common). Use a toothbrush to brush away lint, dust, etc. from all crevices, sights, and crannies. Lightly oil any moving parts like the pellet plunger and cocking lever pivots, wipe down the barrel and other steel external surfaces with "Breakfree" or equivalent (rust spots on an airgun barrel from acids in perspiration make me want to get out the horse-whip!) and you are done. Some think you need to put silicone grease on the seals and it isn't a bad idea to put it on the cylinder/gun fitting seal (and filling adaptor seal) during your regular maintenance sessions, but the other seals need it very infrequently (and sparingly!)

.22 Pistols Most .22 pistols are very forgiving, but they are still much happier clean than not. .22 firing residue is quite abrasive and there is absolutely no good reason to leave it

in the gun rubbing on the reciprocating parts. The bore, on the other hand, needs very little cleaning in modern .22 pistols. I believe the often iterated saying from the small bore rifle shooters that "more .22 bores are ruined by brushing them than by shooting them." You should never have to use a brass brush on a .22 rimfire bore - patches should be all you ever use. Now, you CAN brush the chamber, particularly if you get a firing residue "ring". In the shop and with my own guns, I use the same pull through loop I use for the airguns and the same TSI-301 cleaner. Works just fine. Strangely, it seems many .22 shooters worry about the bore but let the rest of the gun accumulate crud until it stops. I had a gun in a couple of months ago that "just suddenly quit working". I could barely retract the bolt on this Pardini .22. The reason: A semi-solid mass of firing residue and gummed oil was filling the frame to the extent the bolt could literally not plow its way through it any more! I would recommend that at least every 1000 rounds that the gun be stripped down and the frame be cleaned thoroughly inside and out. No need to remove the trigger components, but get in among them and Q-tip and pipe-cleaner and toothbrush them clean of firing residue. I DON'T think much of the "dip, slosh, and blow" type of cleaning. The solvent dissolves the oil and the suspended dirt drops into hard-to-get-at places where it stays until jarred or carried by fresh oil onto surfaces that don't need to be abraded. I prefer to wipe the dirt away and toss it into the wastebasket. Once clean, relubricate with almost any light, non-gumming gun oil. I've been using "Marvel Mystery Oil" for 40 years and it works great. Again, wipe down the outer surfaces with something like "Breakfree".

CF/.45sOK, here we need to really get out the ol' elbow grease! It has been several years now since I have built up 1911 platform match guns and when I was shooting 2700s I was fortunate to be able to use mostly Federal Factory Match ammo. So, I got a little out of touch with the .45 reloading scene until we got in the excellent Pardini GT45s and got a hundred or so of them out on the market. I became astonished all over again at how much crud could and was allowed to collect in these guns - frames, slides, bores, chambers - all bound up with lead or firing residues and the owner's wondering why they had problems with extraction, feeding, etc. We even had a GT45 come back from a very well known publication where it had been sent for review with the complaint it wouldn't feed wadcutter ammo. As the gun was tested for function before we sent it in (we're not totally dumb!), this was a puzzlement. Looking at the gun, we saw the chamber and the barrel were heavily leaded. Once the gun was cleaned of the lead - surprise! - it functioned perfectly. The tester later acknowledged the gun had been fired with some unknown source reloads prior to the "formal" testing, but no one apparently noticed it was clogged up from lead. The internet bulletin boards catering to bullseye shooting seem to be almost obsessed with stories about how "until I began to use 'magic lube X', I couldn't shoot 30-40 shots without my barrel being hopelessly leaded up." And we have seen some truly atrocious reloads sent in with guns so we could "see what the trouble might be ." Lead composition and type of lubricant is very, very critical in reloading for the .45. And a leaded barrel will NOT shoot well at all! I know full metal jacketed bullets are at least twice as expensive, but using them will eliminate about 95% of all problems. If you are going to reload with lead, for heaven's sake buy good hard alloy bullets with quality lubrication and then test them before using them in matches. Good bullets with good lube should NOT lead your barrel. But, you HAVE a leaded barrel, so lets get it

clean. Here you MUST use a tight fitting (50 caliber for the .45 ACP barrel) brass brush and a good cleaning solution. I still use good old Hoppe's #9 (being old fashioned, I guess). You are going to have to "scrub", but do it correctly: soak the brass brush in solution, and push it all the way through the barrel in one direction (start from the chamber and use a clean aluminum rod or a coated steel one.) DO NOT stop mid-bore and try to reverse the brush! Now let the wet bore sit for about an hour (if possible) and then wet the brush again and make several all the way through one way and draw back all the way through the other way type passes. Put through a dry patch and hold the barrel up to the light and use a glass if you have one and look for lead in the grooves and chamber. If there is any, repeat the soaking and brushing until it is gone, gone, gone! You must not leave ANY lead - it will just result in even more, quicker build up of leading and certainly you will not regain the accuracy from the barrel. Also, keep your brushes clean! And, please don't use these lazy man's products out now such as the "Bore Snake". How can you justify pulling a tapered rope with brass bristles through a bore more than the first time unless thoroughly cleaned before the next pass? And, never pull one through a .22 - those brass bristles aren't recommended - see above! Anyway, once the barrel is squeaky clean, go to work on the slide and frame with the Q-tips, pipe cleaners, toothbrushes, etc. Pay particular attention to the extractor. This is the next biggest source of problems. In the 1911, you need to remove it from the slide and thoroughly clean the channel it rides in. In guns like the Pardini, dig out all the residue behind it and the slide. Once again, when clean, lubricate with good gun oil, wipe down the outside, etc. Some shooters using iron sights put on various "sight blackening" materials. These usually are hydroscopic (pick up moisture) and if left on the sights will result in rusting of the metal beneath the black residue. So, brush off completely after use.

In summary, a clean gun will always perform better than a dirty gun and will last a lot longer, have better resale value due to pristine condition, and will often mean the difference from a pitiful story and a proud smile at the end of the match. Just do it!

Don

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