

DIY gun care

Keep your shotgun in pristine condition with these gun care hints and tips from Longthorne Gunmakers

For many seasoned shooters an article on gun care will be like preaching to the converted. However, much like any mechanical device, maintaining your gun is an essential part of keeping it working correctly and sometimes a few hints and tips don't go amiss. Plus, it's good to have an awareness as to why your gun may not be performing 100%.

One of the more obvious things you should do is to clean the barrels each time you use your gun. This removes any accumulation of plastic or lead in the bores. A bore snake is a great way to do this as it's made from a soft, non-ferrous material that doesn't damage the internal barrel, and it's easy to use. You should never use steel brushes on or within the barrels as this will damage the surface finish.

Check your gun regularly, not forgetting the firing pins. Some batches of cartridges have softer primers than others, which can result in the firing pin piercing the primer. You will know if this is the case as the gun will be difficult to open and will need some gentle persuasion and then once it does open there will quite often be some dark, sooty residue inside the action as well as a large hole in the primer. This can sometimes damage the firing pin by burning off the tip, in which case it will have to be taken to a gunsmith to rectify.

Dry firing your gun (i.e. firing it without any cartridges in the chambers) may damage the return springs or the firing pins themselves, so we don't recommend that you do this. If you want to pull the trigger whilst the gun is not in use, you should insert snap caps first. It is also generally good practice to insert snap caps if the gun is to be stored for any period of time. If this is the case, insert the snap caps, pull the trigger once and if your gun has an inertia system bang the heel of the gun gently with your hand and that activates the second trigger, which you can then pull. In doing this the spring pressure is relieved ready for storage.

One or two drops of gun oil should be applied

'You should never use steel brushes on or within the barrels as this will damage the surface finish. Instead, use a soft, non-ferrous material'

CONTACT DETAILS

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every so often to the firing pins and the holes – this will ensure continued lubrication.

Keeping the chambers clean with a chamber brush will assist in ensuring that cartridges eject properly and don't 'stick'. Bad ejection is not always the fault of the cartridge, although it can be. If it becomes continuous it could be that your ejector springs are failing and need replacing, or the ejector timing could need some adjustment, which invariably happens with use and age.

If you have been shooting in wet or damp conditions take the barrels off the action and the fore-end wood off the barrels as soon as it is practical to do so, then dry with a clean cloth or absorbent paper. We recommend applying some de-watering oil to the metal work only, taking great care not to get it on the wood as the oil can damage the surface of an oiled finish. It should then be left unassembled for a couple of days, then wiped down well before being reassembled and placed barrel down in the gun cabinet. This ensures that any oil which could be contained in the action chamber does not seep into the wood.

It is also important to make sure your gun is totally dry prior to putting it in its case which must also be free of moisture. Failure to do this can result in the steel parts of the gun becoming rusty



PICTURE: DOM HOLTAM

Fur Feather & Fin (www.furfeatherandfin.com) stock the popular Hoppe's BoreSnake priced at £29.99.

in a very short time and the stock could become water-marked. It's a good idea to carry a soft, dry absorbent cloth in your gun case for this purpose.

If your oil-finished stock is looking a bit jaded or patchy, whether it be from age or use in wet conditions, there is a remedy. Remove from the gun, make sure it is completely dry first, then wipe down with a small amount of white spirit. Next, lightly rub down with 1000 grit Wet n Dry wire (wire wool tends to leave small amounts of wire in the wood). Wipe off any dust with a soft cloth and then apply a few very thin coats of stock oil. Leave to dry thoroughly in a warm, dry place between each coat.

With this technique less is definitely more. At Longthorne we make and retail our own blend of stock oil which develops a rich lustre with relative ease over a period of time, but of course there are other brands available that work in different ways. Prior to assembly you should put a small amount of gun grease on the hinge face and hinge pins and one or two drops of gun oil on the ejectors.

If you have removable chokes, remove them after using the gun, clean both threads, the gun

and the choke. This can be done by spraying a little de-watering oil on the threads and wiping off with a soft cloth. After cleaning, apply a small amount of grease to the thread, and reinsert until finger-tight; do not over tighten as this could strip the threads. This will help to ensure that your chokes remain removable and don't get stuck in situ. Once this happens they can be extremely difficult to remove without damaging the barrels.

In a drop out trigger mechanism it may be possible to easily remove the mechanism and clean it, however you must take care to ensure that the pins do not drop out as they are usually just a 'slide' fit. However, in a true sidelock we do not recommend that the sidelocks be removed without training as they need to be reassembled carefully to avoid the gun possibly malfunctioning or doing damage to the wood.

Tempting as it is we don't usually recommend tinkering with a gun internally unless you really do understand the mechanics, as to do so can often cause problems. If you need clarification on any of these issues don't hesitate to contact ourselves or any good gunsmith. ■

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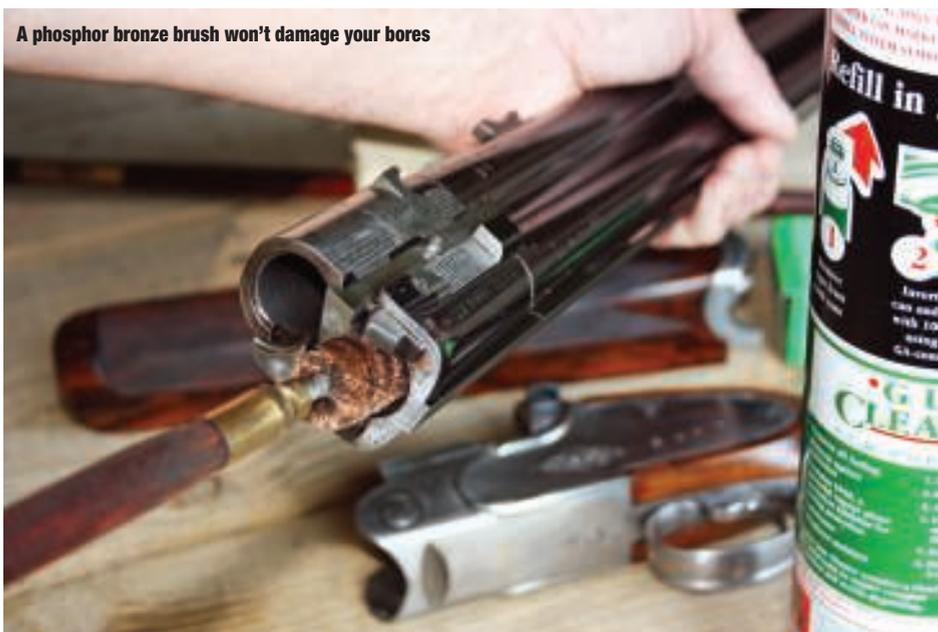
Apply grease sparingly to moving parts



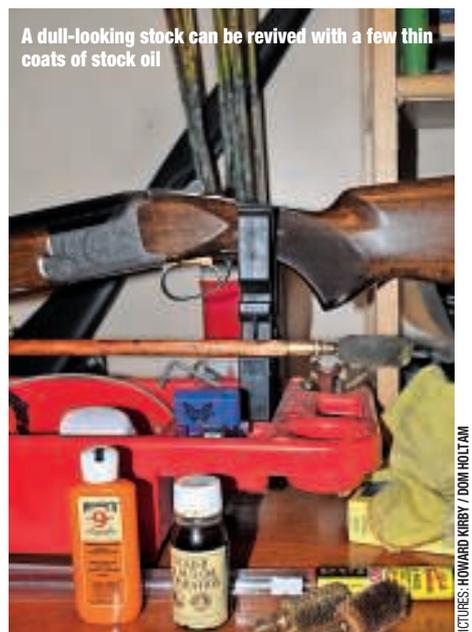
Most gun cleaner sprays will clean and oil your gun at the same time



Plastic or lead can accumulate in the bores



A phosphor bronze brush won't damage your bores



A dull-looking stock can be revived with a few thin coats of stock oil

PICTURES: HOWARD KIRBY / DOM HOLTAM