

Tips For Better In Line Accuracy

by Scott E. Mayer

Want some simple tips to wring the most accuracy out of your in-line muzzleloader? Just as with metallic cartridge rifles, consistent loading technique for in-line muzzleloaders results in consistent accuracy. Here's my loading regimen.



Dry all preservative oil from the bore using a clean, dry patch before loading a muzzleloader. Any residual oil in the bore can contaminate the powder resulting in hangfires or misfires and inconsistent accuracy.



Clear the nipple for the first shot by firing a primer only in a safe direction. If you're not sure your muzzleloader is loaded, be sure to do this with the muzzle pointed toward a safe backstop. If the nipple is clear, the force of the primer should be able to move a light object such as a leaf.



A key to accurate shooting in a muzzleloader is for the powder charge to be consistent. Loose powder should have the bullet seated with the same pressure and to the same depth for each shot. Using Pyrodex Pellets, whether used in conjunction with Hornady's Lock-N-Load Speed Sabot or on their own, is the easiest way to obtain powder consistency.



Seating bullets is a three-step process beginning with pushing the bullet just into the muzzle with a tool that fits the nose so it doesn't deform the bullet tip or start the bullet at a cocked attitude.



Once started, take a second to check the bullet to make sure it looks straight and that none of the sabot petals are twisted, torn, or otherwise damaged. A sabot that fits too tightly may be damaged during loading and result in poor accuracy.



The second step to seating the bullet is to push it a couple of inches down the bore with a short starter. This step can be skipped in the field for expediency's sake, but experience shows that better shot-to-shot accuracy is obtained by using a short starter.



Fully seat the bullet with the ramrod using one steady push. Starting and stopping with the ramrod can deform the nose of the bullet and tear the sabot.



If using a load for the first time, line up all of the components on the outside of the barrel to see if it looks like the load is fully seated.



If working up loads, fully seat the bullet and mark your ramrod at the muzzle with a piece of tape. The tape is your reference point to confirm that a load is fully seated for each shot and is temporary until you find the most accurate load. Once you find the most accurate load, you can permanently mark the ramrod.



Always use clean, fresh primers or percussion caps.



Be sure to practice with your ramrod in place. Muzzleloaders can shoot to a different point of impact without the ramrod in place.



Wipe the bore between shots with a slightly moist or greased patch. This is not a thorough cleaning but simply a means of keeping powder fouling minimal, soft, and consistent.

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