Those immortal words spoken years ago still captivate our attention any time we hear them. Nothing can be more irritating than having a problem in the field with our equipment, or a failure on our part in understanding how it works?

Lets explore a few of the problems encountered and the remedies required to pull our “peanuts” from the fire! Set your ego aside and join me as we delve into several common “mistakes” that shooter’s encounter, causing them untold grief and lack of confidence in their equipment.

**Problem:**

All data cards and software suck, some use G-1 math and others use G-7 to calculate drop and drift. I’m hear to tell ya that the information they provide is not accurate. Why at 1000 yds I need to add/subtract 2 MOA to my dope to hit the x-ring! My zero’s are perfect, my SD’s are single digit and I’m shooting the best rifle and scope money can buy!

We’ve all heard that sob story, or, may have uttered those same words ourselves. Let’s look at what usually is the cure and how simple it is to apply.

**Cure:**

The math used to calculate drop and drift is far more accurate than any rifle on the line given accurate information i.e. muzzle velocity, ballistic coefficient, temperature, altitude, Barometric Pressure and humidity. So what gives? Usually, and I’ve helped folks with this problem for years, is that they fail to check actual elevation values in their scope. Calm down, I hear grumbling in the peanut gallery from many of you. Why, I shoot a NIGHTFORCE, Leupold, Zeiss or Schmidt & Bender rifle scope!! “Aint nothin” wrong my scope!!!!

Oh Really??? While these are indeed the best scopes in the industry, how may of you have ever checked the ACTUAL “click value” over the ENTIRE trajectory curve of your data card? Probably not many of you? We all trust the elevation and windage knobs with the same fervency of our local Pastor. But did we ever CHECK????

Take a tall target backer and draw a plumb line on the face. Zero the rifle EXACTLY at 100 yds and begin to elevate the point of impact for a measured 15 MOA 30 MOA and 45 MOA. **Be sure and multiply the minute of angle value by 1.047** ( True minute of angle). So, a 30 MOA correction should elevate the bullet precisely 31.41 inches at 100 yds. and a 45 MOA correction should read 47.115 inches.

Not all of you, but a few of you, should see a problem when doing this. Over the years I’ve tested several brands of scopes and found discrepancies as mentioned above. The importance of validating your scopes tracking is of vital importance if you are really serious about your shooting. Do not take your scopes “click values” for granted. As Josef Stalin once said: TRUST but CHECK!!!!

**Problem:**

My ammunition shoots like a champ at 100 yds. under home court conditions, 80 degrees, B/P 29.53”, 1500' elevation, humidity 50%, but when I went to my friends house in Montana in the dead of winter it was embarrassing. What went wrong?
Cure:

Load development and powder choice is more than not the problem. You developed a great load at 80 degrees, at let’s say, 3000 fps. When in Montana, the temperature dropped to 30 degrees and so did your velocity. This caused a drastic change in barrel harmonics and your group went to “Hell in a Handbasket”. Try using the Hodgdon Series of Extreme Powders for better results; these include the following powders: H-322  H-4895 Varget  H-4350  H-4831  H-1000 and Retumbo. These powder selections offer the least temperature sensitivity and will provide the most consistent velocities over an extreme range of temperatures.

Test your ammunition by putting it in the freezer overnight and shooting it over your chronograph the following morning. ** Be sure to transport it to the range encased in ice and a small cooler. Use a thermometer to record ammunition temperature prior to firing. Note the velocity changes and act accordingly.

Montana Buck – 463 Yards – Rifle 308 Winchester 168 Grain Sierra Matchking

Problem:

I’ll often get erratic shots when shooting from field positions. The shot goes left/right or high/low for no explained reason? When I shoot from the bench, I seldom if ever experience this?

Cure:

Your shooting/body position is the problem. Its doubtful that a “field gremlin” has taken refuge in your rifle, remove the bolt and do a visual check to confirm. More importantly, note the butt position on your shoulder, is it in the pocket? Do you have a firm grip on the rifle? Are you pulling the rifle straight back into the shoulder pocket, or is there lateral pressure as well? Is the trigger finger compressing the trigger straight back into the
shoulder pocket? Is the rear swivel stud hanging up on your field bag? Is the rifle tracking properly during recoil? Is your breathing cycle consistent?

Field positions can be tough given terrain difficulties. Be certain that all of the above suggestions are in check and that you are not shooting while breathing (causing vertical dispersion) Be sure that the rifle is tracking perfectly for at least 3/8 of an inch without interruption from the ground or shooter (which can cause both vertical and horizontal errors). Go over your mental check list before each shot. Focus intently on the target and let the trigger squeeze become a sympathetic movement.

On a positive note; your table manners at the bench are pretty good. Most shooters shoot better from the bench than field positions. Bench groups provide a yardstick to match when shooting prone bi-pod or over your pack. When you can duplicate your rifle’s bench accuracy from field positions, you know you are doing everything right!

**Problem:**

I get inconsistent chambering with my reloads. Some close easy, while others are kinda hard?

**Cure:**

Sizing your brass is the problem! While many folks like to neck size, I prefer to F/L size of all my brass and bump the shoulder back .001 of an inch. By doing so, we eliminate the occasional “snug” loaded round and have more consistency in our ammunition. I use a slug of barrel steel and chamber it for the parent cartridge. By inserting the sized case into this gauge I can accurately measure and adjust my sizing die to bump the shoulder back any amount desired. Note*** Be sure to check the OAL of your brass as well, oftentimes shooters neglect to trim their brass and the out of spec. OAL can cause the tight chambering.

**Problem:**

Accuracy falls off in my rifle after 20 rounds or so. I let the barrel cool between groups but that doesn’t seem to help?

**Cure:**

Spare the rod and soil the barrel. Your barrel is obviously fouled and a good cleaning is in order. Most shooters do not clean their rifle properly or have determined the “FOUL OUT” point with their rifle. Shoot 5 shot groups letting the barrel cool between groups and when the group size is such that you are no longer happy with the accuracy, it is time to clean. This will vary from rifle to rifle. Powder, bearing surface of the bullet, barrel condition/quality all play a part. When accuracy degrades, be it 10 rounds or 35 rounds, this becomes your cleaning interval for that rifle.

When it is time to clean, use plenty of elbow grease. We recommend 60-80 strokes of a good ammonia solvent (Barnes CR-10) adding more solvent every 10 strokes. Every 60-80 rounds use Witches Brew Copper Remover to remove the stubborn copper and carbon in the barrel. If you have access to a bore scope, use it to determine if this cleaning regimen is proper for your barrel. Forget about wet patches, spermicide foaming cleaners and other gimmicks, scrubbing with good solvents and the use of a copper bronze brush is the best way to maintain accuracy.
Problem:

My “Testosterone Magnum” has quit shooting, the barrel is clean, but it refuses to shoot. I’ve only shot 6-700 rounds thru the gun.

Cure:

It may be time for a new tube? Most “Newbie’s” think barrels last forever, well think again. That 338 Lapua you necked to 25 caliber will not last very long. When you are burning 80-110 grains of powder, throat erosion and heat checking are major concerns. Have the barrel bore-scoped to determine the throat condition. If it looks like a dry lake bed you’re in trouble. When patching the bore, if you feel the patch snag and drag in the throat area, this too is an indicator of a worn barrel. Buck up and have it replaced, its the cost of entertainment and the price we all pay for our shooting pleasure.* Note a 308 Winchester is good for around 3500-4000 rounds before accuracy starts to drop off. A 257 STW around 600-700 rounds and its toast. It’s not a bad idea to build a practice rifle in a milder caliber allowing longer life before re-barreling. A 6mm BR, Dasher, 7-08 or 308 are good rounds to choose when barrel life, mild recoil, and cost effective ammunition are a consideration. Remember; the shooting techniques are the same and practice does make perfect when that shot of a lifetime presents itself.

Until next time.....

Respectfully,

Darrell Holland