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"8 GA Shotguns With 10 GA Chamber Inserts for Duck & Goose Hunting"

Last February at the Wisconsin Waterfowl conference in Stevens Point, Tim Mosar, of the US Fish & Wildlife Service very much enjoyed our collection of 4 GA and 8 GA antique and very collectable waterfowl guns. I showed him my J & W Tolley 8 GA with 10 GA chamber inserts installed. I asked him if this shotgun was legal with sub gauge chamber inserts using non-toxic shot to hunt ducks and geese. He told me he did not know. Then after some time I contacted Tom Van Haren, Natural Resources policy officer of Wisconsin DNR. A letter dated June 6, 2008, Mr. Van Haren stated, "An 8 GA shotgun is not legal for hunting any migratory game birds in Wisconsin, not even if the shotgun is equipped with a 10 GA chamber insert. The firearm would still be considered to be an 8 GA shotgun, regardless of what size shells it might be loaded with." Yet while hunting ducks near Horicon Marsh last October I asked John Below, Horicon Marsh Refuge office of the US Fish & Wildlife Service if they had a problem with the 8 GA shotgun with 10 GA chamber inserts for duck and goose hunting. He examined my shotgun, then made a call to his supervisor asking him this question. John told me they did not have a problem with this request.

The state of Wisconsin sets an established bag limit each year for both ducks and geese. Would I be allowed to use an 8 GA shotgun with 10 GA chamber inserts hosting non-toxic shot? What harm would I have or adverse effect on our waterfowl resources since very few hunters would have 8 GA shotguns. In my mind the shell contained in the shotguns chamber should determine the gauge as stamped on the shell head not the antiquated system of so many lead balls per pound. In fact, many both 12 GA and 10 GA shotguns have bores by mechanical measurement larger than 0.775. Are they then illegal also?

At present, the Wisconsin DNR has ruled that my 8 GA shotgun with 10 GA chamber inserts with non-toxic shot can not be used for migratory game bird hunting.

Be it resolved that the Conservation Congress at its annual meeting held in Walworth County in April 2009 recommend that the Conservation Congress work with the DNR to take action to correct this situation by introducing a rule change allowing 12 GA or 10 GA chamber inserts to be used with non-toxic shot in 8 GA shotguns for harvesting migratory game birds.

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