

The SB1-F12 is pathetic...



I bought an SB1-F12 to see if it would make a decent turkey gun. Since it is marketed as such, I had no doubt that it would be at least okay for that function.

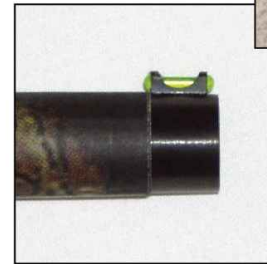
Boy, was I ever wrong...! The F12 is a 3.5" chamber 12 gauge with a 24" barrel and the new Mossy Oak painted hardwood stock. I had called H&R's parts department three times since these stocks started showing up on new guns and asked if they were available as replacements. "No" was always the answer, so I decided to buy the F12, and maybe send it back to H&R after the turkey season for a 20 gauge Ultra Slug barrel. The fact that the F12 comes with a full choke barrel that isn't threaded for choke tubes bothered me, but I felt sure that if it was marketed as a turkey gun and was a 3.5" chamber, surely H&R/NEF had done their homework and the forcing cone and bore taper were made with 35 - 40 yards shots with 3.5" #4, 5 or 6 shot in mind.

So I special-ordered the gun, took it home and added a few accessories to make it more pleasant to shoot. I documented all of this to add to the H&R/NEF info on my Guntinkerin' website and fully expected to report a satisfying experience. But instead, I have to say as a turkey slayer, the F12 is not functional for an ethical hunter.

I added a better sling and swivels, Camo-Clad decals to the barrel, a Tru-Glo Fat Bead front sight, a C&H Recoil Suppressor and lightly polished the bore. H&R/NEF would probably say that I ruined the patterning by doing the last thing. However, I have done the same to every one of 7-8 Pardners I have owned or bought as gifts for my children and all I do is remove the dried preservative grease from the inside of the bore. I simply use #0000 steel wool in a slotted cleaning rod and some light oil to completely break the grease loose.

I finally got a chance to shoot the F12 between storms that had dumped rain every other day for the last two weeks. I had a wide selection of shells, and tried them all; Winchester 3.5" Supreme #'s 4, 5 and 6, Focchi 3.5" #'s 4 and 5, 3" Winchester Supreme #6, 3" Federal #5 and 3" Remington #4 . I'm sad to say, NONE were even vaguely encouraging as turkey killers!

At 35 yards, the only one that you could even hope for a clean kill with was the Winchester Supreme 3.5" #5 load, and it is marginal at best. All the rest were out-of-the question for use by an ethical hunter. Many of the loads had less than 20 pellets in the 10.5" "kill-zone" circle on my homemade turkey targets, as opposed to 75 to 100+ I get with good loads for my Mossberg 500 or customized 3" H&R Topper. Even the ones with 20 or so pellets in the kill zone circle have big holes in the pattern. The best load of 3.5" #5's only put 7 pellets in the actual drawn head and neck area as opposed to about 22 for the best load from my Mossberg, and only 2-3 might have hit anything vital.





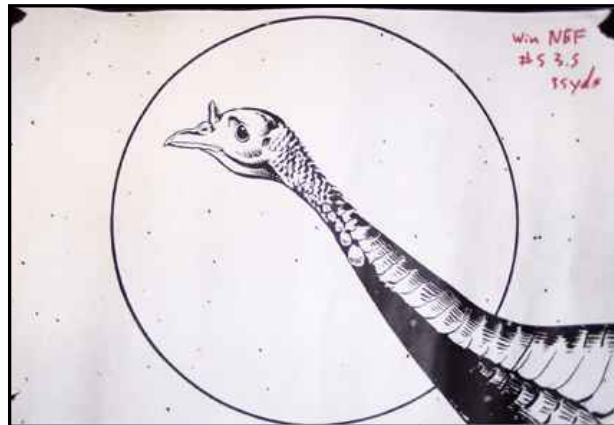
And be forewarned; the F12 with 3.5" 2 1/4 - 2 3/8 ounce turkey loads is a BEAST to shoot! Even with the mercury-filled suppressor, recoil was absolutely BRUTAL. I've shot .416 Rigby safari rifles with less bite. Note in the picture that despite the fact that I'm 6' 5" and 220 lbs, I am still rocking back and the forearm has come out of my hand even though my gloves have rubber grip dots and I'm trying to hang on. The factory ships the gun with a steel weight bar in the buttstock screw hole, but I'm glad I replaced it with the C&H Suppressor. I wouldn't even think about shooting this firearm with full-tilt loads without one!

At right are the best of patterns from my F12 and Mossberg 500 at 35 yards. Quite a difference, and this just confirms my belief that this gun should come from the factory with the choke-tubed barrel. I've killed my last two birds with my custom Topper, so to use a different weapon this year I'll be toting the Mossberg.



If I were NEF, I'd be embarrassed!

I was truly disappointed. I'll just have to set this shotgun aside for turkey season and send it in for the 24" Barrel with the choke tube threads and 20 gauge Ultra Slug barrel. It is too late to do so for this season. I suppose if I take a turkey early in the season with the Mossberg, I might take the F12 out with the # 5 load it likes and resolve to only shoot at 25 yards or less.



H&R should stop making this gun in its current configuration, and only produce it with the threaded for choke-tubes F10 style barrel. At least then you would have the option of tuning the pattern with a variety of turkey tubes.

And another suggestion, on shotguns H&R/NEF makes like my 28" Topper Deluxe that has choke tubes, the front sight bead should be drilled and installed BEHIND the choke tube threads, closer to the shooter's eye by a couple of inches. If you notice in the picture of the Fat Bead fiber optic sight, the shank doesn't have threads to the top under the bead base. This is the case in many aftermarket beads. When they put the sight bead over the choke tube area - even though they position it over the unthreaded part of the tube - it makes installing an aftermarket bead just about impossible. There just aren't enough threads in the hole to use the undercut beads. They should think about these things in their gun design.

