
SHOOTING With The

Colors Of The Rainbow



You have a variety of lens colors to pick from, and you're also likely seeing different colored targets at local shoots. How do you handle them?

BY MARTY FISCHER

The clay pigeon has come a long way since Ohio native George Ligowsky was granted a patent for the first target in 1880. The name clay pigeon was pretty much spot on, as the original Ligowsky clays were in fact made of clay. Some years later, an easier-to-break limestone and pitch target was developed in the U.K. and became the predecessor of the modern-day clay target we shoot today.

In its infancy, the clay pigeon was the color of the clay or material from which it was made, but in time, targets were painted to make them more visible for the shooter against certain backgrounds. This leads us to where we are today, as target manufacturers have played with the colors of the rainbow when producing their clay targets in recent years.

The challenge for shooters with these different colors is

to find a way to make the target the most visible to their eyes as it flies along its path to the break point. For target setters, the challenge is to select a color that will be most visible for the shooter against a certain background. Let's take a look at this from both the shooter's and target setter's perspectives.

Most trap and skeet fields around the country don't have much background clutter for shooters to contend with. The shot window in those games is usually pretty wide open and targets are usually visible against an open sky. As a result, the all-orange or orange-dome clays are easily seen by most shooters. Target setters for the sporting game are often faced with different challenges, since shooting backgrounds in that game can be anything from trees to rocks to open sky, grassy meadows or a combination of those things. This makes proper target color selection very important. The last thing a good target setter should be looking for is an eye test.

CLAY TARGET COLORS

One way to determine what color best fits a given background is to take a look at what colors are available on today's market. The most common colors, all orange and orange dome, have previously been mentioned, but colors like black, white, pink and fluorescent green are also available. At one time, both blue and yellow were available, but those colors are tough to find these days. With all of these options



available to the target setter, what colors work best against a given background?

On most skeet fields and clays courses, the all-orange target has been the color of choice for decades. Since skeet targets are shot at 25 yards or less, the orange is

▼ Pink stands out against almost all backgrounds and is sometimes even more visible than the standard orange.



very visible to most shooters. When thrown against dark backgrounds like trees or over green vegetation, the orange is highlighted and is very visible to most shooters. When thrown against a deep blue sky, the orange is particularly brilliant in the air. But for all of its positives, there are limitations for the

◀ Vivid green targets are bright enough to be seen against most backgrounds, open or wooded.



▲ It's pretty rare to see blue targets these days — obviously, they present a problem thrown against a clear sky.

all-orange target against certain backgrounds.

For instance, the all-orange target starts to blend in with the sky as the light becomes more white with clouds and haze or golden late in the day. This is especially true when the targets are thrown on-edge and at a distance of 35 yards or more. The all-orange clay can also be a visual challenge during the fall and early spring months, when treed backgrounds are more orange in the fall and a bright, vivid green in early spring.

You will find that an all-black target is most visible

against most open-sky backgrounds, especially when some target surface is visible. The exception is when black targets are presented on-edge against a grayish sky. Where the black target is not a good idea is against a treed background and in the shadows there. Putting a black target against a dark background should be avoided at all times, as they are very difficult to see in those conditions.

Many target setters have started using the vivid green targets for many presentations. This target color is surprisingly good against a number of backgrounds. Because the green is so bright, it can be used in the woods

setting and can be thrown low over the ground, too. It is quite visible against most sky backgrounds as well.

Many clubs throw orange dome targets, which feature a black bottom ring and an orange top. These are great

grounds, is the all-white target. This color has been a part of clay target games long before the vivid colors other than orange showed up. The white clay is best used at night where there is a black background to make

to target setters, but what about the shooters who have to deal with seeing those colors? Well, that's what the wide variety of shooting glasses lens colors are for, since the different color shades are made specifically to provide a contrast between the target and the background.

There is one thing that should be addressed when it comes to target and shooting lens colors. About 8 percent of male shooters are red/green colorblind or color challenged, as some optometrists prefer to call it. That percentage is much lower in

▼ All-black targets are extremely visible thrown against a blue sky.



▼ Solid orange is certainly still the most common target color.



▲ Orange dome targets can look smaller in flight than they really are.

as well as in the open. Like many colors, it gets a little tough to see when thrown against a light whitish-gray sky.

Perhaps the target color that is least used, but may in fact be the most visible, is hot pink. This color stands out against pretty much any background and is often more easily seen than the common orange clay. This color can be really good in a wooded

for open sky and can be used in sporting clays in some settings to give a target the look of a midi in flight, since the orange will stand out much more than the black. They are not very visible in darker backgrounds because of the black ring.

One last color that is available, but not used much these days for sporting clays because it can be difficult to see against most back-



that color very visible to the shooter. You will find white clays on some skeet fields that offer night shooting.

SHOOTING LENS COLORS

We have identified the different target colors available

lady shooters, but it is safe to say that some shooters in every clay target event will not see target colors the way that most in attendance do. You will find that as shooters age, their ability to see color diminishes. These issues are real, and they certainly affect how shooters pick up

target movement off the trap and subsequently focus on the target to the break point. Shooters who are red/green color blind can get some relief by using vermilion lenses on their shooting glasses. This is the best color to enhance orange for shooters with this condition.

Let's take a look at the most popular lens colors and how manufacturers say they should be used. Keep in mind that these colors will vary slightly depending on the manufacturer, but the base color is what we're talking about here. Those colors are as follows: yellow, vermilion, purple and brown.

There are varying degrees

indoors. The vivid yellow is better for indoor shooting and great for rifle/handgun shooting using black and white targets.

Perhaps the most commonly used color for clay shooters is vermilion or rose. This color is designed to highlight orange against green backgrounds, as the color tends to dampen the green. This color is great for shooters with red/green color blindness or for those who don't see orange well.

For shooters who have a lot of green backgrounds where they shoot, the purple lens color just might be the ticket. This color is available in a variety of shades

a dark purple reduces glare, makes the eyes more comfortable and highlights the orange.

For shooters who really want to see orange and relax

We could spend lots of time discussing the various shades of lens colors that are available for shooters, but those main colors are the ones that virtually every

▼ Pale yellow glasses are excellent for low light conditions.



▼ Vermilion and purple highlight orange against a green background, which makes these lens colors popular among sporting clays shooters. Brown works in a similar way and is ideal for sunny days.



of yellow when it comes to shooting glasses. This color is great for low light conditions and foggy, hazy and gray-sky days. A light or medium yellow lens is better for shooting clays, as it will enhance orange targets, making them more visible. The pale yellow is great at dusk and dawn for hunters and can also be used

from light to dark purple. Shooters will find that the lighter purple color really highlights an orange target against a tree background. The color is a combination of vermilion and gray that really neutralizes a green tree and vegetation background. For really bright, deep blue sky backgrounds,

the eyes on a bright, sunny day, a medium or dark brown lens is perfect. The brown color has enough red in it to highlight the orange. You will find that bronze and certain shades of orange are from the brown/red family, so those colors also enhance orange and provide eye comfort.

lens color on the market are derived from. Shooters have to make their own choices based on where they shoot and how they see color.

A good rule of thumb when choosing a lens color is to choose the lightest shade of a certain color that lets you see the targets clearly without squinting. Keep in mind that if you go with a dark color, you are diminishing the light and therefore the information on the target that the eyes are sending to the brain. Think about dimming your headlights at night. The less light, the tougher it is to see and disseminate information.

So there you have it — the colors of the rainbow in targets and lens selection. Make the right choice that allows you to see the birds clearly and your scores will reflect that proper choice. **CTN**