

SMALLBORE RIFLE SILHOUETTE

Smallbore Rifle silhouette shooting is a fun and exciting rifle marksmanship venue, using your faithful old .22 rifle, or purpose built silhouette rifle in .22 LR.

MORE ON SILHOUETTE

Smallbore silhouette is a scaled down version of the sport that originated in Mexico as “siluetas metalicas” or metallic silhouettes, which used high power sporting rifles at much larger steel targets in the shape of chickens, pigs, turkeys and rams, at ranges out to 500 meters or more. Smallbore silhouette uses iron targets 1/5 the size of the high power targets at 1/5 the distances for each set. The course of fire is 40 shots at 40 animals. Ten chickens at 40 meters, ten pigs at 60 meters, ten turkeys at 77 meters and ten rams at 100 meters.

The matches are fired in the offhand position. No benches, bags, slings or sticks are used to steady the aim. It is just you and your rifle in the standing position, firing one shot per target. Any target that is hit out of sequence is scored a miss for the intended target.

Each set of ten targets is separated into two banks of 5 targets. At the command “fire”, the shooter is allowed 2 1/2 minutes to fire five shots. A “cease fire” is called, any alibis are dealt with, then a short break of less than 2 minutes is taken before the second 2 1/2 minutes of firing to complete the relay. Coaching and spotting with a scope is allowed, but neither should interfere with other shooters’ ability to engage their targets without distraction.

After the two strings of fire are completed, all rifles will be made safe by unloading, inserting an open bolt indicator and placing them in racks behind the firing line.

When the line is determined to be safe by the match director, all shooters will then proceed to walk to their targets to reset and paint them in preparation for the next relay. This process is repeated until all shooters have completed the 40 shot course of fire.

In the event of a tie within a particular class, or for the overall winner, a sudden death shoot-off will determine the winner. The shoot-off target is determined by

shooter classification and the competitors shoot until one hits and the other misses. Shoot-offs are very exciting to watch and even more exciting to participate in.

EQUIPMENT

Some of you may think that 100 meters is an awfully long way to shoot a .22. That is not true! Any .22 rifle in good working order is capable of a perfect score of 40/40 if the shooter can do it. The beauty of silhouette shooting is that almost everyone has everything they need to get started. Iron sights are fine but most shooters use scopes with repeatable adjustments to establish "zeros" for each distance.

There will usually be two matches on a match day. One match is for the "Silhouette Rifle" (sometimes called the "Standard Rifle"). The second match is for the "Hunting Rifle". The "Hunting Rifle" class includes rifles that most of us call "sporters". These range from the very inexpensive, and common Marlin bolt-action repeater, to high end collectables like the Winchester 52 repeating sporters. The hunting rifle cannot weigh more than 8 1/2 lbs (including sights), and must have a barrel with a tapered contour. It must have a hunting style stock without adjustments or added features, and a trigger pull of not less than 2lbs. Thumbhole stocks are not allowed in this category.

Other rifles in this category would include most magazine fed or single shot bolt actions, tube fed lever actions, or tube or magazine fed semi autos. Basically, the .22 you have had gathering dust for as long as you can remember is all the gun you need to get started. Any rule compliant Hunting Rifle can also be used in the Silhouette Rifle match.

The Silhouette Rifle category allows the use of more specialized target competition rigs with fewer limitations. They may weigh up to 10 lbs 2 ozs including sights, with "bull" barrels up to 30 inches long. Any trigger not subject to accidental discharge may be used, but "release" triggers or automatic triggers are prohibited. Stocks are usually specifically designed to conform to current rules, and can be wood, fiberglass, carbon fiber, Kevlar, or laminates. Attachments that do not place the rifle overweight, or extend past the length of the barrel are allowed.

SIGHTS

As stated before, any sight may be used as long as your rifle still conforms to the rules. But most sporters that have not been scoped will probably have the old tried and true leaf rear sight that limits your elevation and windage adjustment. With these sights, most shooters will try to establish a zero for one target and "hold over" or "hold under" for the rest. This may be fine for a skirmish against a rising hoard of belligerent soda cans where time is not a factor and ammo is plentiful, but for silhouettes it is a major disadvantage.

The obvious upgrade to your sporter is a "decent" scope. A decent scope is one that can reliably focus, adjust, and repeat for each of the known distances required. It should be rugged, and capable of doing this for every match. Most optics chosen for .22 rifle duty are usually not suitable for silhouettes because they lack the features of adjustable objective lens (focus), target turrets and higher magnification. When choosing a scope for your favorite .22, think of buying a nice scope. Don't let the fact that is going on your .22 limit you to only the cheapest optics.

AMMUNITION

Smallbore shooters today have the widest array of choices available for ammo than anyone in history. Today we have subsonic, standard, high and hyper velocity ammo by more manufacturers than you can shake a stick at. Most silhouette matches prefer .22 LR subsonic or standard velocity ammunition; some will allow high velocity ammunition. The rules prohibit use of hyper velocity ammunition.

****You may not use .17M2, .17HRM, or any other .17 rimfire ammo****. The velocity of these bullets is so high that damage to the targets and risk of ricochet prohibit their use.

For more info and forum discussions pertaining to silhouette competition go to www.steelchickens.com. This is a great resource for online discussion, with very knowledgeable and friendly members.

So dust off that squirrel slayer, clean the bore, and return it to action in the fun, exciting, and very challenging sport of Smallbore Rifle silhouette shooting. Once you

hear the "clang" of a well aimed round and see the target disappear, you just might get some of that dust out of your system, too.