

**7, 8, 9.** All involve the actual shooting at game: Shooting into flocks; shooting at the front bird in flocks, taking going-away shots beyond 30 yards.

**Solutions:** Shoot only at single birds; target isolated or outside birds; never shoot at a going-away bird beyond 30 yards.

**10.** More than two hunters shooting simultaneously. When this happens there is a tendency to spray shot around rather than aiming at a specific bird and knowing what the result of your shot is.

**Solution:** Limit shooting to two hunters per attempt. In larger parties, take turns.

**11, 12, 13, 14.** All involve retrieving strategies. Dropping birds into heavy cover, failure to use “swatter” loads, not doing the right things when a bird is down, and not using a trained dog.

**Solutions:** Always select hunting sites over open water; pass up shots where the bird will fall into heavy cover; carry and use “swatter” loads (where they can be used safely); dispatch wounded birds on the water immediately; never take your eye from where a wounded bird entered cover; get yourself, another hunter or your dog there quickly; use a trained dog.

**15.** Not counting lost birds in your bag limit. A bird knocked down and lost is a dead bird.

**Solution:** Ethical hunters count all downed birds, recovered or not, in their daily bag limit.



To learn more about each of these solutions, attend one of the department’s clinics. The department conducts clinics for interested groups at no charge. To arrange for a clinic, contact the department’s Hunter Education coordinator at the Pratt office. (620) 672-5911 or [wayned@wp.state.ks.us](mailto:wayned@wp.state.ks.us)



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# WOUNDING LOSS IN HUNTING

## 15 Causes and 15 Solutions



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In any form of hunting there will be game that is wounded and not recovered. To most people, this is a waste of the resources that hunters, conservationists and this Department have worked so hard to maintain.

Ethical hunters make every effort to humanely harvest the game they hunt. At times, the game is wounded and the ethical hunter must then make every effort to recover that animal as quickly as possible.

Wounded animals are the result of mistakes, lack of certain skills and incorrect strategies. All of these can be corrected.

CONSEP, the Cooperative North American Shotgun Education Program has made major studies of this problem as it relates to waterfowl hunting. All of CONSEP's findings can be related to all types of hunting; upland bird, small game and big game. These findings can also be related to every method of hunting; shotgun, rifle, pistol, muzzle loader and archery.

CONSEP has identified 15 causes of wounding loss. They are listed here along with CONSEP's solutions to each.

**1.** Wounding losses in waterfowl have nothing to do with steel shot. They have everything to do with shooting skills on the part of the hunter. The single most important cause of wounding loss is poor shooting skills on the part of the hunter. A shooting test was devised and given to over 25,000 shotgun hunters. This test determined that over 50 percent of them could not hit six out of eight clay targets at 20 yards; only 15 percent could hit six of eight at 30 yards and so far only 14 individuals have accomplished hitting six of eight at 40 yards. To date no one has hit six of eight at more than 40 yards.

**Solution:** *We must practice regularly on clay targets with the loads we will use, at the ranges, angles and speed of the game hunted. With rifles we must practice regularly at the ranges and in the positions we will experience while hunting. Whatever the tool, we must know what our effective range is not what the advertised effective range claims.*

**2.** Poor Distance Estimation. Humans are notoriously poor at judging distance. If we can't judge distance, we do not know if game is in our effective range.

**Solution:** *Learn and practice any of several methods of range estimation. Subtending is the most effective for shotgun hunting. Use a range finder. Stop guessing.*

**3.** Using the wrong load and/or choke for the bird and shooting distance common to the hunt.

**Solution:** *Use scientifically proven loads and chokes as listed in the CONSEP Lethality Tables (available from KDWP Hunter Education).*

**4.** Failure to pattern test the shotgun and loads or to properly sight in a rifle.

**Solution:** *Pattern test against the Lethality Table. Sight in your rifle.*

**5.** Shooting beyond maximum personal shooting skills distance. Everyone has a maximum effective range. The only way to find out what that distance is, is to shoot your gun and your loads at various distances and find out where you skill runs out.

**Solution:** *Limit your shooting to YOUR maximum effective range.*

**6.** Shooting beyond maximum distance capable of meeting minimum pattern density.

**Solution:** *Keep your shots within the distances specified in the Lethality Tables.*

