

Pattern Your Shotgun for Turkey Hunting



Shotgun: _____
Choke: _____
Shot size and type: _____
Shell length: _____
Shot weight (oz.): _____
Distance to target: _____

Turkey illustration by Mark Raitzel
Turkey X-ray courtesy of Gregory T. Boyer, DVM

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Missouri offers some of the best turkey hunting in the nation. Get season dates, regulations, permit information, and tips for safe, successful turkey hunting at short.mdc.mo.gov/ZZy.

Before heading afield, be sure to test your shotgun, choke, and ammunition combination by patterning your shotgun.

- Stay safe. Always point your firearm in a safe direction and wear eye and ear protection.
- Shoot only on an approved shotgun shooting range with an appropriate backstop. Find ranges at mdc.mo.gov/shootingranges.
- The safe and ethical range at which to shoot a turkey depends on your shooting skill and the limitations of your ammunition. At a maximum, shots should be restricted to 40 yards or less.
- Aim at the turkey's wattles (marked with a black dot on the target).
- To cleanly harvest a turkey, you will need at least four pellets in the vital area (marked in white on the target). Missouri regulations allow for No. 4 size shot and smaller. Smaller shot sizes allow for more pellets in the shell, but less kinetic energy is achieved. Larger shot sizes allow for more kinetic energy but fewer pellets in the shell.
- Repeat the patterning process any time you change shotguns, chokes, shooting distance, or ammunition (shell length, shot charge, powder charge, etc.).
- Keep a detailed logbook of patterning results for future reference.



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Interested in learning more?

The Conservation Department offers many programs, including programs on shotgun patterning. Visit mdc.mo.gov/outdoorskills for more information.

As hunters, we have legal requirements and ethical expectations to abide by. Properly testing equipment will increase harvest opportunities and reduce the likelihood of wounding a bird.

Good luck and stay safe.