



Today's
Shooting
Tomorrow's
Countryside

Lead Shot Ban 2029 Can I Use Steel Shot in My Shotgun?

A simple guide for UK shooters – what's changing, when it happens, and how to check if your shotgun is suitable for steel shot.



From 1 April 2029, lead shot will no longer be permitted for ordinary live-quarry shooting or recreational clay/target shooting in Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales). There is a three-year transition period from 1 April 2026.



A cleaner
countryside
for future
generations

Can my shotgun use steel shot?

Follow this step-by-step guide to find out.

1

Look at the proof marks on your shotgun

They are usually found on the barrel flats (under the barrels) and on the action.

2

Can you see the fleur-de-lys steel proof mark?

This mark shows the gun is suitable for High Performance Steel.



Example of a fleur-de-lys steel proof mark. (The actual mark is small and may appear with other proof marks.)



YES – Fleur-de-lys present

High Performance Steel may be suitable

Check chamber length, cartridge specification, shot size and choke (see guidance below).



NO – No fleur-de-lys

3

Is the gun Nitro Proofed? (from 1954 onwards)

YES

**Appropriate Standard Steel
may be suitable.**
Still check chamber length and consider the type of gun (see guidance below).

NO / NOT SURE

Do not assume steel is suitable.
Have the gun checked by a competent gunsmith. Alternatives such as bismuth may be appropriate.

Where to find proof marks

Proof marks are normally found on the barrel flats (under the barrels) and on the action.



Barrel flats (under the barrels)



On the action

Other proof marks you may see



Nitro Proof
(1954 onwards)



Steel Shot proof
(High Performance Steel)



Gauge (bore size)

4

Is it a traditional lightweight game gun, or are you unsure about its condition?

⚠ IF IN DOUBT – GET ADVICE FROM A QUALIFIED GUNSMITH

British Proof Authorities recommend no more than 1/2 choke with Standard Steel in traditional lightweight game guns.



Choke considerations

CIP does not specify a choke restriction for Standard Steel, but traditional lightweight game guns should use no more than 1/2 choke. High Performance Steel has specific choke and shot size requirements.



Shot size

Steel is less dense than lead, so it's recommended to use at least two shot sizes larger than your usual lead shot for comparable performance.



Older guns

For pre-1954 or older guns, do not assume steel is suitable. Have the gun inspected by a competent gunsmith.



Need advice?

If you are unsure about your shotgun, proof marks, chamber length or ammunition, speak to a qualified gunsmith. Guns & Clays offers independent shooting advice and can help you understand what you have and what questions to ask.

Book a Shooting Advice Call →



DISCLAIMER:

This guide is for general information only and does not constitute professional or legal advice. Always check your shotgun's proof marks, chamber length and condition, and use only ammunition suitable for your gun. If in any doubt, consult a qualified and competent gunsmith.

Key Sources (Harvard Reference):

BASC (n.d.) Shotgun. Available at: <https://basc.org.uk/ammunition/shotgun/> (Accessed: 10 September 2026).
BASC (n.d.) Using non-lead shot for live quarry shooting. Available at: <https://basc.org.uk/ammunition/using-non-lead-shot-for-live-quarry-shooting/> (Accessed: 10 September 2026).
BASC (n.d.) Moving away from lead. Available at: <https://basc.org.uk/ammunition/moving-away-from-lead/> (Accessed: 10 September 2026).
CIP (n.d.) TDCC – Tab VII: Shot cartridges. Available at: <https://bobp.cip-bobp.org/> (Accessed: 10 September 2026).