Feet and Hip – Distance and Rotation

The position of the feet has two important, correlative functions with regard to the standing position. On the one hand, it affects the external and internal firing position by influencing balance, statics and tension, and on the other, it simultaneously controls the alignment of the zero point and thus the direction of the gun toward the target. A number of problems are involved in this double role. The firing position and zero point are determined by the position selected, and each change affects both components. Whoever places his feet wider apart to stabilize his firing position with a broader basis must accept the "secondary effect" of a higher zero point. In addition, the foot position can be varied almost endlessly. Each foot can be shifted in all directions and simultaneously rotated on its own axis. Both feet give you an unlimited number of combinations... In this chaos of possibilities, it is difficult to find a rule. We recommend a basic position as in the sequence of pictures above. The feet are more than shoulder width apart with the left foot at a right angle and centrally placed on the line to the target. The right foot is standing slightly behind the left and is turned slightly outward. The hip is situated parallel to the sighting line. Beginners can start with this basic position, and advanced shooters should also heed it as a means of orientation. Whoever has strayed too far from this normal standard usually struggles with mistakes of the firing position in the upper body. For example, inclined pelvic positions involve adventurous positions of the feet. Here, the hip must first be brought on line. After that, the legs will find the right hold on the ground by themselves.

Heinz Reinkemeier

Fig. 1
The pictures start with a photo viewed from the top (rightly inclinéd) and proceed down through feet to the position of the feet. The length of the body is consistent in relation to the width of the body. In the ideal case, the feet stand directly under the rear of the axle, and the body mass is evenly divided on both sides of this border-line. The firing position is therefore balanced and has good prerequisites for balance. The hip is pushed forward to the toes and is parallel to the line of sight. The right foot is placed somewhat to the back in order to compensate for the rotation of the shoulders.

Fig. 2
The search for the ideal feet position is endless. You will never find the perfect position because your body is a little different each day and because conditions change from shot to shot. Nevertheless, you don't have to start from scratch each time, since you have an approximate value in your head. You feel it and believe. It's stored as a picture in your visual memory.

Fig. 3
Rotating both feet around the plant line of the body's center of gravity, without changing the hip position. With this shift, the rotational tension is regulated in the lumbar region. Increased rotation increases tension. This stabilizes the upper body but nevertheless causes overstretching and possible pain. Insensible and overweight shooters have a tendency toward reduced rotation. This reduces stability. It is more dangerous to open the hip toward the target. Bullets threaten to stray to the side.

Rotating one or both feet inward or outward on the heels, inward rotations passively tighten the leg's musculature. Outward rotations loosen up the legs and relax the knees. The balance changes with such rotation. The inward turning shifts the center of gravity forward, while the outward turning shifts it backward. Exaggerated rotations reduce the standing surface. Here, the lateral alignment of the gun is merely changed. The correction of the zero point is favored through the total rotation, especially when there are large deviations. The effects of this however are considerable. One centimeter in 30 centimeters at the target for air rifle shooting and as much as 1.5 meters for smallbore shooting.

Learn your firing position and then check whether the imprints still match when you reassess your position. If you are halfway satisfied, you will have an approximate value that you can use as a starting point the next time you shoot. Be careful not to blind yourself to this pattern. Allow yourself minor shifts after each shot. Your firing position changes constantly, and your feet have to keep up with these alterations. They can do this all by them- selves. As soon as you feel an impulse, you should twist and turn your legs exactly the way they want to. This even holds true when you have just shot five times in a row.

A sheet of paper with the line of sight and an outline of your feet will help you transpose your basic position. The next time around, place yourself in the old tracks.