Get your aim on

Duncan Busby continues where he left off, and explains how to find the best aiming device for your scope

In the last issue I covered the options available to you when purchasing a new scope for your compound bow. In this article I will go through the process of setting up your scope's aiming picture, to suit both your chosen discipline of archery and your own particular aiming style.

At this point you should have chosen your scope body and lens. The next stage is to choose your aiming device; dot or ring decals or a fibre optic pin. Just as with the scopes and lenses, different aiming devices are suited to different forms of archery, although there is no real rule of thumb when finding out what works best for you, so trial and error is essential at this point. But before I get into this process I should outline just what we are looking to achieve when choosing your aiming picture.

Many people give little thought to which form of aiming aperture they use, simply using the first dot they come across or the one that came on their lens. Believe it or not, the dot, ring or fibre you use can have a huge impact on how well you aim and consequently how well you score.

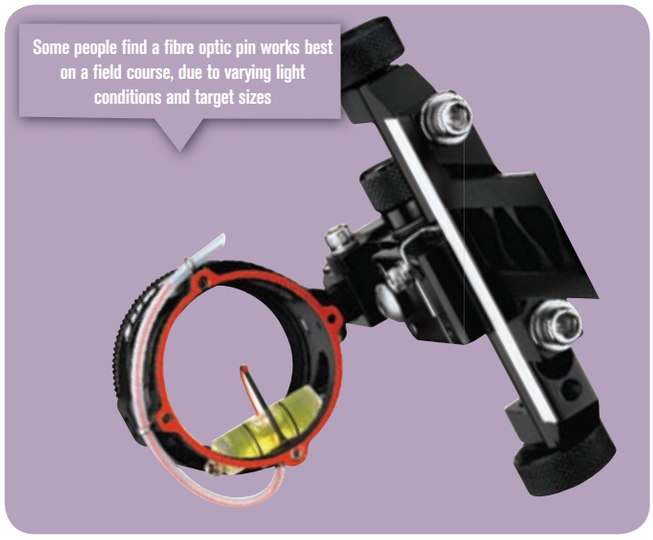
Aiming is a complicated business; you need to find something that allows you to hold consistently in the middle of the target but does not encourage you to over-aim or hang up on the shot. This aiming picture will be different for everybody and there is no right or wrong way, just what works and what doesn't. Once you find your perfect aiming aperture you should be able to hold your sight on the middle of the target and execute your shot easily and accurately.

Firstly, you will need a good selection of aiming dots and rings; these are available from most good archery shops and come in a range of different colours and sizes. Stand at the distance you shoot the most frequently, for many compounds this is now 50m, and start by selecting a fairly small dot. I would normally choose a black one as this colour stands out against most target faces the best. Place it in the middle of your lens – getting the dot as central as possible can be a little tricky, but the decals you bought should come with a centring tool, which looks a bit like a small target and helps you identify the centre of your lens. Try to get your dot as close to the centre as possible as this will reduce future alignment problems.

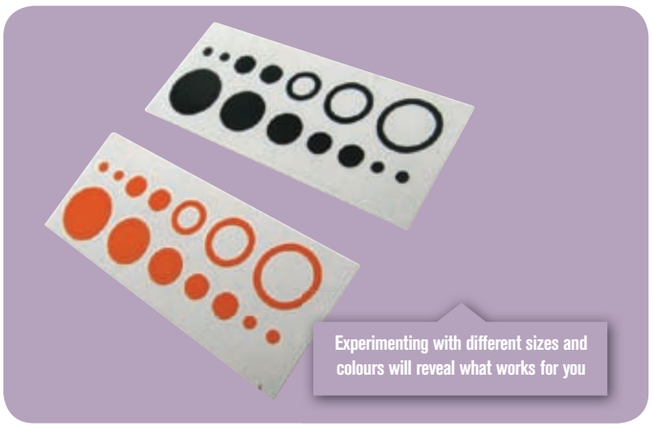
Once you've set up your scope, shoot a few ends at your chosen distance. Make a note of how easy it is to hold your bow in the centre of the target and whether your sight feels like it wants to move off in a particular direction, and be aware of your group patterns.

You will need to shoot several ends to get a good idea of how easy it is to aim with this particular dot, and remember to be patient as it can take a while to get used to something new. Once you have a good idea how it's working, swap it out for a different one for comparison.

Attach the new dot (of the same colour) to your lens, making sure you apply it as centrally as possible, and shoot some more, making careful note of any differences in the results. You should continue this in a systematic way until you have tried a good range of sizes and documented each one's aiming and grouping patterns. Don't be afraid to try some extreme sizes, going for the biggest or smallest dot you have



Some people find a fibre optic pin works best on a field course, due to varying light conditions and target sizes



Experimenting with different sizes and colours will reveal what works for you

022-023_Scopes_Rev2.indd 22 7/9/12 18:33:02

may give you some surprising results and is always worth trying out.

At this point you should have an idea of which sized dot works best for you, so try it at other distances to ensure it works equally as well; as tournament distances vary you may find yourself compromising a little on the longest and shortest ones. This is perfectly normal and as long as it doesn't cause you any major problems it isn't something to worry about.

If you have gone through the range and found that no one dot works significantly better than the other, you may want to consider trying an aiming ring. This works in much the same way, but instead of your aiming point sitting on top of the target, you aim at the target through the ring. Some people find it difficult aiming with a dot and can tend to peer around it to see the middle of the target, which can lead to missing shots out to the side. If you find yourself doing this a ring may be for you, as you can still see the centre of the target when aiming and the ring's shape aligns itself easily with the coloured rings of the target. This form of concentric pattern is much easier for your subconscious to deal with, so it may be worth giving it a try. Again, go through a good range of sizes and keep a note of your results with each one.

By now you should have tried a good selection of different dots and rings, but what about different colours? If you find yourself over-aiming you may want to try a colour that stands out a little less against the target face. If you find it hard to execute the shot because you are too preoccupied with the aiming process, and any movement causes you to slow down your shot routine or hit the trigger, you may suffer from a form of target panic or gold shyness. Trying a different colour dot or ring may help, and orange or yellow are a good choice as they are a little less imposing against the colours of the target. You may also find that different colour apertures create different aiming habits, so trying a different size from what you have previously used may be worthwhile.

Remember to always record your results so you know what worked best as you go through the different combinations. You should go through this process again when you move indoors, as the extreme change in distance can mean that you may need to change to a different sized dot or ring.

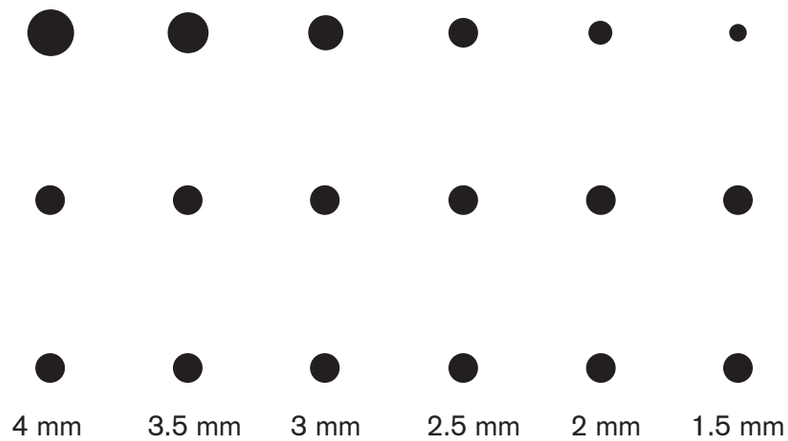
As I mentioned earlier, different aiming apertures may work better for different archery disciplines, such as the change from target to field shooting. Most forms of target archery take place in a well-lit and consistent environment; even over a FITA round the size of the target faces in your scope is reasonably consistent. But field archery can be very variable, and some can find that going from light to dark environments, and shooting over a wide range of distances and target sizes, can make it difficult to decide upon a mode of aiming. Since changing your lens for each target would be impractical, a slightly different approach is needed. Using a fibre optic pin instead of a stick-on decal can make a huge improvement to your field game, as the fibre is much more visible in low light conditions, which will make centring to the target much easier. Fibres also come in a range of sizes and colours, although not as big a range as dot and ring decals, so you should be able to find one that will best suit your individual aiming habits. Just remember in field shooting your fibre will need to work at a range of distances on several different face sizes, so some compromise may be needed.

Whatever your discipline, experimenting with your aiming aperture can make a huge difference to your results. Remember that aiming should be comfortable and consistent, and if you find yourself aiming off or struggling to hold steady you may be using an aiming device that is not right for you.

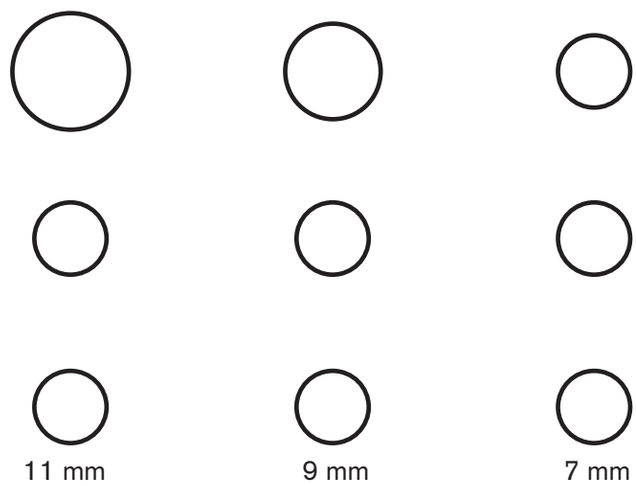
Although there are certain consensuses for using dots, rings or fibres in particular disciplines, if you are most consistent using a fibre for target archery or a large dot for field no one can say you're wrong, it's just what works best for you. Everyone is different; you could even try mixing things up by using a ring and a dot or fibre together.

With a little trial and error and a lot of patience, you should be able to find the perfect aiming system for whatever form of archery you do, which hopefully will give you the results you want.

DIFFERENT DOT SIZES



DIFFERENT RING SIZES



022-023_Scopes_Rev2.indd 23 7/9/12 18:33:03