

# CHANGING GAUGES THE EASY WAY <sup>69</sup>

## SL 900 Gauge Conversion Package

Reviewed by Peter Caroline

Sometime in 1998, I started reloading shotshells on my new SL 900 loader. This was my first shotshell loader, but I had, in years past, helped other shooters reload shotshells on other brands of loaders. During these sessions, I always was able to add some new words – none fit for mixed company – to my vocabulary. It seemed as if something, or many different things, continually needed readjustment. And rejects were produced more often than usable reloads. After this experience, the Dillon SL 900 was a revelation. It just worked, and a perfect, usable shotshell popped out after each stroke of the roller handle.

Of course, back in 1998, the SL 900 came in just one flavor...12 gauge, which was fine for my purposes at the time. Recently, however, I acquired a really neat little 28 gauge side-by-side, and I soon discovered that there are no bargains in new 28 gauge shells; if you don't have a trust fund, you reload or you can't afford to shoot. Fortunately, Dillon now offers conversion packages for the SL 900. I ordered one for 28 gauge.

When the package arrived, I opened it and immediately spotted something that looked like an antique carburetor...actually the 28 gauge tool-head assembly. There was also a large gray disk, which turned out to be the 20/28 gauge casefeed plate for the electric casefeeder. A small blue plastic box held an assortment of parts. I knew that it would all be explained in the instruction manual...but wait, where **was** the instruction manual? I called up Mark Pixler at Dillon. He knows that I'm one of those people who has an overwhelming compulsion to read manuals, so he was patient with me. "Look in the manual that you got with your SL 900. The conversion instructions are in there." Only they weren't. As I mentioned before, I got my SL 900 at a time when it was 12 gauge only. So I e-mailed Mark, and a couple of days later

received a new, updated SL 900 instruction manual, complete with detailed and well-illustrated conversion instructions.

Now, right up front, there are a couple of things that the instructions don't tell you. First of all, you should have a highlighter pen handy, so you can check off the instructions

as you complete each step. Second,

make sure you have the right Allen wrenches – 1/8", 9/64", 5/32" and 1/4" – available. They came with your SL 900, but such things have a way of wandering. Now, get yourself a new reloading manual (shotshell specs change, and so do loads), read it and decide what components – once-fired hulls, primers, powder, wads and shot – you'll need for your reloads. Obtain those components and have them at hand. You will need to have them available when you make your final adjustments...you can't, after all, adjust your powder charge if you have no powder. Also, unless you're an NBA star, you'll probably need a small stepstool for various tasks on this tall machine.

Converting my SL 900 from 12 gauge to 28 gauge was remarkably simple.

The instructions make each step very clear, and everything plugs in where it's supposed to. Changing the

locator buttons could be a challenge for someone with large fingers, so you might want to borrow a small child for this operation. The only real glitch I encountered was in reinserting the e-clip into the shot dispenser top; I managed to break

the e-clip (so much for the "Use a Bigger Hammer" theory). Anyway, Dillon is very good about sending out free replacement parts, no questions asked.

Now, I'm all set up to reload 28 gauge shotshells on my SL 900. Somehow, the initial price of a box of Winchester AAs doesn't sting so much, now that I know that I'll be getting a lot more mileage out of the hulls.



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