

Rio Arriba County 4-H Shooting Sports Program Safety Practices and Policies

1. 4-H Age policy

- 1.1. Rio Arriba County 4-H Youth Development Programs are open to young people aged 9 through 19. The “4-H age” will be determined by a young person’s age as of January 1 of the 4-H program year.
- 1.2. All participants are highly recommended to have completed a New Mexico Safe Hunter Program and provide a copy of their card to the Certified Shooting Sports Instructor.

2. Adult Supervision Policy

- 2.1. There must be two or more adults present when working with 4-H youth. It is required that at least one Certified Shooting Sports Instructor be present during any shooting activity.
- 2.2. When working with youth ages 9-19, the youth to adult ratio should be no more than five youth to one adult. Factors such as the experience level of the youth as well as the instructor, equipment limitations and the physical characteristics of the facility must all be considered. Safety must be the overriding factor in determining the proper youth to adult ratio.

3. Classroom Safety Policy

Factors that must be considered:

During any hands on learning experience, mistakes will be made. Therefore it is critical to maintain an environment in which a mistake can be made and learned from, without the safety of the students being compromised.

There are three components that must be present for a firearms accident to occur.

They are the Person, the Firearm and the Ammunition.

If one of these components is removed, the risk of an accident is greatly reduced.

Based on these factors the 4-H Shooting Sports Program Instructor has adopted the following classroom safety policies.

- 3.1. **“NO LIVE AMMUNITION WILL BE ALLOWED IN A CLASSROOM WHEN FIREARMS ARE PRESENT”**. All students must be made aware of this policy and abide by it. Possession of live ammunition in the classroom is grounds for removal of the student from the program.
- 3.2. Dummy ammo, snap caps and safety trainers may be used for demonstration and gun handling exercises. These should be clearly identified as training aids and easily distinguished from live ammunition.
- 3.3. All Firearms used in the classroom must be checked by the instructor and the student each time they are handled to ensure that the firearm is un-loaded in both the barrel and magazine.
- 3.4. The actions of all firearms should remain open, safeties on and magazines out when not being handled.
- 3.5. Safe gun handling rules must be observed at all times. Open Bolt indicators must be present at all times when the gun is not on the firing line.
- 3.6. No horseplay or disruptive behavior will be tolerated.

4. Live Fire Safety Policy

- 4.1. All youth must demonstrate proficiency in the following areas prior to participating in any live fire exercise.

4.1.1. Firearms safety rules.

- Always point the muzzle in a safe direction or down range
- Keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot
- Always keep actions open and firearms unloaded until told to do otherwise
- Only proper size ammunition for firearms being used should be available
- Shooters will only fire at their designated target
- Shooters must wear ear and eye protection when on the firing line
- Open bolt indicators are required to be used at all times
- No one should be near or handling firearms when anyone is down range
- Only firearms and targets authorized by the shooting sports instructor will be used
- Alcohol and drugs, or persons under their influence, will not be allowed on the range
- Obey all additional rules as established by particular range or situation

4.1.2. Basic range commands.

- All commands are given by the Chief Range Officer or appointed representative, except cease fire
- Insist on immediate response to range commands
- The basic range commands are:
 - Is the line ready
 - Ready on the left; ready on the right
 - Load rounds
 - Commence firing
 - Cease firing
 - Make sure all bolts are open
 - Retrieve targets
- Other type of range commands may be utilized in the interest of safety
- Make sure everyone is familiar with the range commands and their required actions

4.1.3. Mechanical Problems:

- Actions to take when mechanical problems arise during firing
 - Have the student immediately raise his or her hand while taking care to keep the muzzle pointed down range
 - Emphasize to the student that they are not to move out of position.
 - Wait a minimum of 30-60 seconds before opening the action after having a misfire or similar problem
 - If necessary, call a "cease fire" until the situation is corrected

4-H Shooting Sports Education Safety Meeting

Agenda

- Introductions
- Cardinal Rules of Shooting (3)*
- Eye and Ear Protection*
- Explanation of Range Rules and Range Commands
 - Range Officer's word is law
 - Eye protection is required
 - Ear protection is required with firearms
 - Open Bolt indicators are required at all times
 - Cease Fire – anyone can call, used for unsafe behavior
- Firearms Safety Check
 - - Good overall appearance (cleanliness)
 - - No loose or missing parts
 - - Mechanical safety operating properly
 - - Action smooth – no binding
 - - Size and caliber fit shooter
 - - Bore clear of obstructions
 - - Trigger pull adequate
 - - Live-firing test for function
 - - Live-firing test for accuracy
- Lead*
- Behavior Expectations
 - Pay attention to instructors – active listening
 - Zero tolerance of disruptive behavior. Everyone must be able to hear and see the instructors
 - If someone does something that is deemed dangerous they may have to sit out of shooting for that practice. If you repeatedly create a dangerous situation you will not be able to continue in the program.
- Other safety information that youth should have (where parents should park, site specific rules and regulations, etc.)
- Dress for: weather, some disciplines will shoot prone, no loose clothing

*Note: These topics are discussed in the 4-H Shooting Sports youth manual (4-H 950).
Instructors might want to assign pages 2&3 for review.

Rationale

Cardinal rules of shooting – these rules are the standard for safety when handling firearms and archery equipment

Eye and ear protection – eye and ear protection are essential for the safety of all shooters Range rules and commands –give the guidelines and procedures that will be followed by everyone on the range.

Lead – information about the toxicity of materials youth may be handling

Behavioral expectations – clear guidelines of what is appropriate behavior on the range, what will be expected, and the consequences of inappropriate behavior

Other safety information – safety guidelines and recommendations based on the particular ranges used

Dress – discussion of types of clothing that can pose safety concerns

4-H Shooting Sports Education

Additional information for each of the recommended topics:

Cardinal rules of shooting –

The 3 cardinal rules:

- ▶Always keep the arrow or muzzle pointed in a safe direction
- ▶Always keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot
- ▶Always keep your firearm or bow unloaded until ready to use

Eye and ear protection –

Eye and ear protection are mandatory for all shooters, coaches, and others on the range. The likelihood of an injury is relatively small, but the impact of such an injury could be serious. Stray or deflected pellets, target chips, gases and powder residue from shotguns and other foreign object have the potential to damage the eyes. Wearing shooting glasses protects them. Many shooters combine their eye protection with corrective lenses or tinted lenses that increase contrast, reduce light intensity, or enhance vision in other ways.

The sound levels produced by any powder firearm can cause hearing damage. Hearing damage is usually gradual, so the shooter seldom notices the loss until it is serious. The damage is cumulative and permanent. The damage from the prolonged exposure during target shooting is a real and present threat. Inexpensive and comfortable hearing protection (plugs or muffs) are available. Some shooters use both plugs and muffs for added protection. Choose the type of protection that fits your shooting style and budget. Always wear them on the range.

Range rules and commands –

Range Commands will vary from discipline to discipline and range to range.

Range commands give the guidelines and procedures that will be followed by everyone on the range. It is especially important that youth understand the *Cease Fire* command and that anyone can call a *Cease Fire*. The *Cease Fire* is used to stop unsafe behavior immediately. It is important that youth always read, understand, and follow the range commands that pertain to the range they are on.

Lead – Avoid eating or drinking on the range. Never eat or drink until after your hands have been washed. Lead from the balls or exposed lead ammunition is of concern. Hands should always be washed after handling the 100% pure lead balls used in muzzleloaders. Lead ball should never be placed in the mouth. Percussion caps and centerfire primers are even a source of lead. The priming compound used in modern caps is lead styphnate. For this reason, care should be taken when handling caps. Lead exposure is cumulative. (Suggestion for coaches and shooters: always have anti-bacterial moist towellets available on the range so you can wipe your hands carefully once you are through shooting.)

Behavioral expectations –

Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Everyone must be able to hear and see the instructors at all times. Youth must use active listening skills throughout the shooting sports meetings. If anyone does something that is deemed dangerous they may have to sit out of shooting for that day. If they repeatedly create a dangerous situation they will not be able to continue in the program.

Other safety information –

This information includes safety guidelines and recommendations based on the particular ranges used. Examples: where parents should park, stand when watching shooting, when to talk to their child, etc.

Dress - Discussion of types of clothing that can pose safety concerns (e.g. no loose clothing). This discussion may also include information about appropriate clothing for different weather and shooting situations (e.g., some disciplines will shoot prone).