4-H Shotgun: Handling Proficiency

Introduction to Handling Shotguns Safely

Time

30-45 minutes

Materials

- Shotguns of various configurations. *(three most common action types, gauges, size, etc.)*
- Dummy ammunition of gauges to match the shotguns to be used.
- Other Visual aids to enhance the presentations with shotgun parts labeled
- Portable gun rack

Space Required

- Indoor/outdoor classroom setting with adequate room to allow multiple participants to work through and demonstrate the handling of shotguns in a safe manner.
- 3 tables set up as stations with various shotguns and dummy ammunition distributed around the venue to allow multiple instructors to work with youth participants. Youth will rotate through the stations and handle a variety of firearms but utilize the same handling protocols at each station.
- Portable gun rack to simulate the permanent gun racks typically found at shotgun ranges.

Before the Meeting

Set up three activity tables with shotguns and dummy ammunition, Preferable to have pump action, semi-automatic and break action shotguns of varying gauge at separate tables. Have portable gun rack to the side ready to transfer guns from tables to rack.

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Lesson Objective

- Learn the basics of safe shotgun handling protocols.
- Learn the basic protocols to be used while on the shotgun range.
- Instill the sense of personal responsibility required for the safe handling of firearms as the first priority.

Background

The shooting sports are one of the fastest growing project area in 4-H at the national and state level. The continued growth of all shooting sports including shot gunning is dependent upon safe handling for all involved. Shotgunning often turns into a lifetime activity, which can be recreational or taken to the highest levels of completion but at all levels safety is paramount. Firearms related incidents/accidents can be virtually eliminated if those involved in shot gunning learn and practice basic handling protocols and act responsibly. With a good foundation created including treating each shotgun as if it is loaded, maintaining constant control of the muzzle while pointing this muzzle in a pre-determined safe direction, ensuring ammunition matches the firearm and is only placed in the chamber with the action closed when the shooter is ready shoot, and not placing the finger on the trigger until the shooter is ready for a target all lead to safe and responsible behaviors.

Activity Instructions (15 minutes)

1. Demonstrate the basics of firearm safety by picking up a shotgun, how to visually and physically check if a shotgun is unloaded while identifying the firearms parts, how to transfer to another person a shotgun, and how to determine which ammunition matches the firearm.
    a. Determine the safe direction where the shotgun will be pointed.
    b. First check to ensure the action is open and no ammunition is in the chamber.
    c. Using two hands ensuring a secure grip emphasizing the finger does not go on the trigger.
    d. Identify the action, safety, muzzle, stock, forearm, barrel, muzzle, and trigger.
    e. Identify the gauge stamp on the barrel while maintaining muzzle control.
    f. Hand off the shotgun to another person.
    g. Replace the shotgun on the table or rack maintaining an open action.
2. Each youth shooter will practice the steps to picking up a shotgun from the table or from a gun rack, identifying basic parts, and transferring a shotgun to another person.

Reflect and Apply Questions

1. Why is it essential to keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction?
2. Why is it important to keep the action open when you are handing a shotgun to another?
3. What might happen if your finger is on the trigger before you intend to shoot?

Activity 2 Instructions

1. Demonstrate how to choose the proper ammunition and how various action types load, dry-fire dummy ammo, and unload a cartridge.
    a. Check to ensure the action is open and no ammunition is in the chamber.
    b. Identify the gauge stamp on the barrel while maintaining muzzle control.
    c. Identify the gauge stamp on the base of the dummy ammunition cartridge.
    d. Choose one of the action types and demonstrate the steps loading, firing dummy round and loading, repeat in each of the action types.
2. Each youth shooter will practice the steps of working the various actions types with dummy ammunition while maintaining the basic handling protocols.

Reflect and Apply Questions

1. Where would you find the size (gauge) of ammunition that a shotgun is made to shoot?
2. What might happen if a smaller gauge shell is placed in a larger gauge shotgun?

Other Related Resources:

Wyoming 4-H Youth Quality Assurance

References

National Rifle Association Basic Shotgun Shooting Course, NRA Washington D.C.
Wyoming Game and Fish Hunter Education Student Manual
Georgia 4-H S.A.F.E. website – http:/www.georgia4h.org/safe/disciplines/shotgun

LESSON 1

4-H Shotgun: Handling Proficiency

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REFLECT AND APPLY ANSWER SHEET

Activiy 1 Reflect and Apply Questions

1. **Why is it essential to keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction?**
   Maintaining constant control of the muzzle of a shotgun is considered one of the basic safety rules for safe firearms handling. The reason for this safety protocol is that all projectiles are designed to come out of the muzzle and if in the case of an accidental discharge the projectile(s) will not travel in an unintended hazardous direction.
2. **Why is it important to keep the action open when you are handing a shotgun to another?**
   The action of the shotgun is the mechanism which loads, fires, and ejects the ammunition. If the action is open when a gun is transferred to another person an accidental discharge is eliminated due to the inability of the firearm to fire.
3. **What might happen if your finger is on the trigger before you intend to shoot?**
   Safety is the first priority for 4-H shooting sports and an accidental discharge from a firearm is greatly reduced when fingers are maintained off of a trigger. The time for finger to be placed on a trigger is when the shooter determines the shot is safe and they are ready to fire at a pre-determined target.

Activity 2 Reflect and Apply Questions

1. **Where would you find the size (gauge) of ammunition that a shotgun is made to shoot?**
   The gauge of a shotgun is stamped in the metal of the firearm, often times on the barrel and indicates which ammunition is compatible with that particular shotgun. Ammunition for shotguns will have the gauge stamped on the brass base of each shotgun shell.
2. **What might happen if a smaller gauge shell is placed in a larger gauge shotgun?**
   If a shotgun shell of a gauge smaller than a twelve gauge is placed in the action of a twelve gauge shotgun the shell will often slide down the barrel and lodge itself in place forming a barrel obstruction. If this obstruction goes unnoticed and is followed up with a twelve gauge shell being fired from this shotgun the results may include a blown barrel or action and physical harm to the shooter.

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