

**Minimum Standards & Best Management Practices  
of a 4-H Shooting Sports Program**  
*Revised September 9, 2015*  
As Established by the 4-H Shooting Sports National Steering Committee

## Minimum Standards

The following minimum standards are not negotiable. A state level 4-H program with an active 4-H Shooting Sports component is advised to adopt and adhere to these standards at the state and county level. Should an injury occur in a state due to the disregard of any of these minimum standards, the potential negative legal/liability ramifications for a land-grant university system could be significant.

1. The National 4-H Shooting Sports Curriculum is the established adult teaching curriculum for training adults to teach youth the shooting sports within the 4-H program.
2. All instructors accept and abide by the National 4-H Shooting Sports Code of Ethics.
3. State, County, and Club level 4-H Shooting Sports Programs will have written risk management plans which includes items such as emergency response and preparedness, insurance, safe storage of firearms and ammunition, state-level reloading policies, etc.
4. All certified 4-H shooting sports instructors are a minimum of 21 years of age and have completed a state level 4-H shooting sports workshop in the specific discipline they will be teaching.
5. State level 4-H Shooting Sports Instructor certification workshops provide a minimum of twelve (12) hours of instruction; including a minimum of nine (9) hours instruction in each specific discipline and a minimum of three (3) hours instruction in teaching youth development, life skills, and risk management.

It is preferable and recommended that state level certification workshops provide fifteen (15) hours of instruction composed of twelve (12) hours of discipline instruction and three (3) hours of teaching positive youth development, life skills and risk management.

6. To maintain certification as a 4-H shooting sports Level I or Level II instructor, one must teach or assist in instruction within the discipline certified at least once every three (3) years.
7. Only factory ammunition is used at 4-H shooting sports competitive events.
8. **Regarding simulated combat sports including but not limited to, paintball guns, air-soft, laser guns, archery tag.** Pointing any type of gun including paint ball guns, air-soft guns, laser guns, laser paint-ball, archery tag bows & arrows or sighting devices at any person or any humanoid shaped target is inappropriate in any 4-H program activity.
9. **Reactive Targets** - Targets which make use of or are composed of (1) live ammunition, (2) explosives, chemicals or flammable substances, or (3) pressurized containers are never to be used at any 4-H event or activity.

## **National 4-H Shooting Sports Objectives of 4-H the Shooting Sports Program**

The 4-H Shooting Sports Program strives to enable people, their parents and adult volunteers to become responsible, self-directed and productive members of society. Agents, leaders, instructor and coaches must understand the goals and objectives of the program in order to manage or present it properly. These goals and objectives are consistent with the goals and objectives of the 4-H program. The program transfers knowledge skills and attitudes to develop human capital, using the subject matter and resources of the land-grant universities.

The specific goals and objectives of the 4-H Shooting Sports Program include, but not limited to, those listed below.

1. To encourage participation in natural and related natural science programs by exposing participants to the content through shooting, hunting, and related activities.
2. To enhance development of self-concept, character and personal growth through safe, educational and socially acceptable involvement in shooting activity.
3. To teach safe and responsible use of firearms and archery equipment including sound decision-making, self-discipline and concentration.
4. To promote the highest standards of safety, sportsmanship and ethical behavior.
5. To expose participants to the broad array of vocational and life-long avocational activities related to shooting sports.
6. To strengthen families through participation in life-long recreational activities.
7. To complement and enhance the impact of existing safety, shooting and hunter education programs using experimental educational methods and progressive development of skills and abilities.

## **BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**

### **National 4-H Shooting Sports**

The National 4-H Shooting Sports Committee, recognizing the diversity of the 4-H shooting sports programs within each state recommends the following Best Practices in the implementation of a state level 4-H Shooting Sports program:

1. **Eye Protection:** Adequate eye protection (shooting glasses, safety glasses or safety goggles, or hardened prescription glasses) is required for all participants in Muzzle Loading, Pistol, Rifle, and Shotgun disciplines. This includes Hunting and Western Heritage live fire events. Such protection is strongly advised for archery events as well. Coaches or spectators on or near firing lines are subject to the same requirements.
2. **Ear Protection:** Adequate ear protection is required for all participants in Muzzle Loading, Pistol, Rifle, and Shotgun disciplines. This includes Hunting and Western Heritage live fire events. Where electronic hearing protection is used, it may not include radio or similar broadcasts as background noise, since that could interfere with range commands. Such protection is strongly advised for archery events as well. Coaches or spectators on or near firing lines are subject to the same requirements.
3. **Footwear** - Any participant while on the shooting line or shooting in any outdoor shooting event is required to wear shoes that completely cover their feet. Examples of footwear that are not acceptable include, but not limited to: sandals, clogs, crocks, flip-flops, and bare feet.

## **Suggested Best Management Practices – 4-H Shooting Sports Equipment – Storage & Transportation**

In many states, the storage of Shooting Sports equipment has not been consistent nor have any standards been set forth to assist states in developing policies related to equipment storage and transportation. This is a list of suggested guidelines for states to consider.

### **Inventory Control**

1. Inventory list of equipment should be maintained by one individual in charge of equipment for the local group/county program/state program. A sign-out process will be used to record who/when/what/when returned.
2. Only approved, current instructors may sign out program equipment from inventory.
3. Extension staff responsible for the 4-H Shooting Sports program in the county/state should also have access to all program equipment, the inventory list, and sign-out records.
4. Equipment inventory should be audited at least annually (or more often if requested) by local and/or state Extension personnel responsible for 4-H Shooting Sports program. *The state Extension staff person responsible for 4-H Shooting Sports program has the ultimate authority to remove 4-H Shooting Sports program equipment from any 4-H Shooting Sports club or instructor based on lack of safety practices, inadequate storage and transportation safeguards, concerns about inventory control, inadequate emphasis on positive youth development, or other reasons based on professional judgment.*

## **Storage of Firearms & Muzzleloading Equipment**

1. All Firearms will be stored unloaded in a commercial firearm safe with an open bolt or open bore indicator when not in use.
2. All gun safes should be secured in a locked storage area, following local statutory requirements, if applicable. If no local laws apply, suitable locations include local law enforcement department firearm storage, storage closet or room with limited access, etc.
3. Keys and combinations should be available only to certified instructors, county coordinators, and state coordinators. Extension staff responsible for the 4-H Shooting Sports program in the county/state should also have access to all program equipment.

## **Storage of Air Guns**

1. Air guns will be stored in gun cases that can be locked and stored in a storage room accessible only to instructors, county coordinator and state coordinator.
2. Keys to the storage area should only be available to instructors, county coordinator and state coordinator. Extension staff responsible for the 4-H Shooting Sports program in the county/state should also have access to all program equipment.

## **Storage of Archery Equipment**

1. Archery equipment will be stored in a locked closet or room accessible only to instructors, county coordinator or state coordinator.
2. Doors should be double locked and key should only be available to instructors, county coordinator and state coordinator. Extension staff responsible for the 4-H Shooting Sports program in the county/state should also have access to all program equipment.

## **Ammunition**

1. All ammunition, shotgun shells, rifle shells, pistol shells, powder, caps, BB's and pellets will be stored separate from the guns which use them.  
Access to the ammunition should have access limited: the instructors, county coordinator or state coordinator. . Extension staff responsible for the 4-H Shooting Sports program in the county/state should also have access to all program equipment.
2. Ammunition should be stored in a closet or room where there are at least two separate locks on the door.

## **Transportation of Equipment**

1. All applicable local, state and federal laws are to be followed when transporting firearms, ammunition and other 4-H Shooting Sports program equipment and supplies. Only licensed individuals age 18 or older are permitted to drive vehicles transporting 4-H Shooting Sports equipment.
2. When transporting firearms, air guns, ammunition and muzzleloading guns, the transporter should have the guns in locked hard cases with gun locks on each gun (either a trigger style gun lock or a cable style gun lock).
3. Equipment should be transported in such a way that the equipment cannot be seen from outside the vehicle. Some examples of concealment include transporting in the vehicle's trunk, in a locked trailer, beneath a pick-up truck bed topper, etc. The vehicle should not be left unattended when equipment is being transported.

## **Youth & Adult Participation**

1. A 4-H Shooting Sports Instructor has the right to refuse any participant from the shooting sports activity in the interest of safety for the participant and others in the program.
2. Instructors are encouraged to identify strategies to accommodate youth / adults with disabilities.
3. 4-H Shooting Sports Programs are open to all youth 8 years of age or older (as of Jan. 1 of the current year) without regard to race, color, sex, handicap, religion, age or national origin. Each state Land Grant University determines 4-H maximum age eligibility. Note that age eligibility for National 4-H Shooting Sports Events are determined by the National 4-H Shooting Sports Committee and may be different than that of states. 4-H Clovers (age 5-7) are not eligible for any aspect of 4-H shooting sports programs as these are not age appropriate activities.