

FIREARM AND HUNTER SAFETY SESSION

THE HUNTER SAFETY PROGRAM IN KENTUCKY

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In 1945 the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources began its effort toward teaching conservation in the schools of the commonwealth. As an incentive to good attendance and close attention in the classroom, outside activities were added. Casting, archery, and shooting were taught and competitions held at school, district and state levels with prizes for the champions. A camping program was instituted in the beginning and it grew as the school program grew. Naturally, the camp activities included fishing, casting, boating, swimming, archery, and shooting. In teaching these skills and a fuller enjoyment of the out of doors, we felt our young people would be more anxious to learn the means of protecting the resources which made them possible. It is part of our philosophy that the lives of our young people are the most important of all our resources. Safety in the use of outdoor equipment has logically become an important facet of the instruction we give in both school and camp.

In the beginning our work in the schools was conducted as an extra-curricular club activity. Membership was open to boys only in the 6th grade through high school upon payment of 50 cents dues. Over the years it has evolved into an in-class approach which includes all members of the 5th and 6th grades of as many schools as our personnel can possibly meet with once a month. The time available and the number of students involved precludes the teaching of marksmanship. However, we can and do continue to teach each year in November a class in Gun Safety. Our instructors are provided with a set of 36 slides and a narration. They also take to the class guns of the most used types. With the actual guns they can teach nomenclature and illustrate the operation of the actions and safety devices. With the slides they show the safe and unsafe ways to store and care for guns and ammunition and the right and wrong way to handle guns in target shooting and hunting situations. Courtesy toward the landowner and other hunters is also emphasized. A printed test is given to all students to take home and work on until the next meeting. In the past years we have encouraged the students to discuss the questions with their parents or older brothers and sisters. This year we are offering the test in two parts. Half is for the student and half for the parents. We have devised a wallet size certificate of successful completion for the students and an 8½" x 5½" certificate for the parents. In the situations where there are not so many students some of our officers will have shooting practice in April as an outside activity. Some years ago the Daisy people provided us with a number of air rifles and back stops which many of our men use in classrooms or gymnasiums shoots for familiarization.

Our two camps were attended by 4,399 boys and girls this past summer. The gun safety instruction and testing they were given is quite detailed and comprehensive. 1,052 campers passed and received certificates. The test begins with the camper entering his home and making preparations to go hunting. He must correct any unsafe situations before leaving. He must select proper ammunition and wear a bright color and check his barrel and action. Before beginning the hunt he must ask permission from the landowner. During the hunt his conduct and gun handling is tested in various situations. Some of the situations are:

Crossing a fence; Game animal in line with house; Song bird target; Single file movement with other hunters; Stepping over a log in snake country.

The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources acts as the state coordinator for The National Rifle Association. In this capacity we have through July 1968 approved 699 Hunter Safety Instructors and 449,031 students have been graduated. We are now in the process of qualifying instructors in 5 state universities where the Gun Safety program will become a part of the Military Science Departments' instruction. This will give us a potential of several thousand students and instructors each year.