

mothers and housewives and I assure you that in their homes guns will be treated with respect and not with fear.

Virginia has started to make a dent in presenting the course to the young people and there is a noticeable decline in the number of reported accidents involving a trained hunter. Yet more good instructors are needed who will stay on the job and not just be a card carrying member. Each shooter-sportsman has an obligation to share in the responsibility of making hunters of tomorrow aware of their responsibilities in the field of hunting.

Public relations can play a very important part in making your program a success. Keep in touch with every media at your disposal and furnish them with information concerning your program. In other words keep your program in the public's eye at all times. One thing I would like to mention and that is this. Virginia's field force has found that their job is much easier when it comes to enforcing the game laws as a result of the Hunter Safety Course. It is better to educate than to agitate.

In closing I would like to say that Hunter Safety Training cannot be emphasized too much. While it might not be the best solution to the problem, it does work — it does cut down on hunting accidents and does it even though there is an increased number of hunters going into the field every year and a smaller amount of land on which to hunt.

It allows those of us who are interested in the sport to show that we are responsible and that we can handle the problem of field firearm accidents. The tremendous effect this training has on young people is impossible to overstate. They learn not only about safety, but of their responsibilities while in the field. And, of course, the best thing about it, is that it works.

HUNTER SAFETY IN MISSOURI

By Earl P. Coleman
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First of all, I would like to say that I believe it is a fine idea to have an annual meeting of the Hunter Safety Coordinators during the Southeastern Conference. Certainly, it is an opportunity to gain new ideas and to measure our progress by that of other states. Any time a group of people can discuss mutual procedures and challenges, some good should come of it.

In the second place, I am not the Hunter Safety Coordinator for Missouri, although I have been familiar with and participated in the program since its inception. The Hunter Safety Coordinator for Missouri is Supervisor Francis "Bud" Eyman. Unfortunately, there is a limit to the number of persons permitted to participate in out-of-state meetings, and since I was selected to attend, Mr. Vernon Bennett, our Chief of Field Activities, asked me to prepare this report.

The correspondence pertaining to this meeting was reviewed and I find the following phrase rather intriguing: "It is imperative that we have a few, excellent papers presented on well established, successful Hunter Safety programs." Now, I wish that those compliments had been reserved until earned. About all I can do here is to give you the history of the Hunter Safety Program in Missouri.

The program was actually started in the summer of 1957, but few students were trained until January of 1958. The interim was spent in training Department and volunteer instructors, and in publicizing our intention to offer this training. One of our Commissioners had learned of the NRA Hunter Safety Program through a conversation with a representative of the NRA. If I remember the events correctly, he came to the next Commission meeting with the question — "Why don't we have a Hunter Safety program in Missouri?" I don't know what the answer was, but shortly afterwards the Field Activities Division was given the responsibility of implementing such a program.

It was started officially by designating a Hunter Safety Coordinator and the distribution of In-Service Bulletin No. 20; subject, "Hunter Safety Training". Mr. Stanley Mate, of the NRS, met with and presented the NRA Hunter Safety Instructor's Course to selected field personnel. Those who attended this class served as a cadre to teach the remaining Educational Advisors, Field Service Agents and Conservation Agents.

Emphasis, at first, was placed on the training of volunteer instructors, but it soon became apparent that if the program was to be successful — particularly in the rural areas — that much of the instruction would have to be done by the conservation agents. In the metropolitan areas of Kansas City and St. Louis and in other cities, we were able to train volunteer instructors who did an outstanding job. A few of these early instructors are active at present. Many people who attended instructors classes failed to teach one class and most of the others lost interest after one or two.

A successful effort was made by our Field Services Coordinator to interest 4-H, FFA, and other youth groups in Hunter Safety, particularly at their summer camps. At present, this annual activity is approved by their state committees and many students have been trained each summer.

It was suggested that an attempt be made to include this program in the course of study in our high schools, but the idea was vetoed; however, many of our agents have been successful in presenting it on an annual basis at their local high schools. This is a good way to reach large numbers of trainees and it would be an ideal method if it could be employed on a state-wide basis. Three state colleges in Missouri have courses for credit on hunting and fishing skills. The Instructor's Course in Hunter Safety must be successfully completed as a segment of the class. These colleges are primarily engaged in training teachers so this should pay off in results for many years.

Those agents that like to teach have done a tremendous job of selling Hunter Safety in their areas as well as assisting other agents that are good at "drumming up" business but are a little reluctant to teach the class. Our agents are fortunate in having the assistance of the eight Field Service agents and the ten Educational Advisors when it is desirable or needed; however, any success that we may have had with the Hunter Safety Program can be attributed to the efforts of the conservation agents.

The usual methods of giving the program publicity were, and are, being used. When it was first established; radio, television, news releases, and exhibits at our major fairs and sports shows featured Hunter Safety training and there have been numerous articles in the monthly magazine — "The Conservationist".

No attempt has been made to qualify students through the use of educational television, but numerous programs have been given using this medium. For example, every high school student in the Greater Kansas City area had the opportunity to view a thirty minute presentation on the subject of Hunter Safety in 1967. We hope to have the mechanics worked out by this fall for instruction and certification of safe hunters on one of the commercial TV stations in St. Louis.

All materials used in the Hunter Safety program are paid for by the Department of Conservation, except that a fee of twenty-five (0.25) is charged for the student's shoulder patch. Our annual budget for this expense is \$2,500.00, however, the full amount is rarely expended.

You are probably more interested in what we have accomplished with this training than in our procedures in establishing and promoting it. In the ten years it has been in existence, we have trained 1,788 instructors and 79,519 students. In that ten year period, only one accident report has involved a person who had been certified as a safe hunter. Our state has received the NRA award for "Outstanding Achievement in the field of Hunter Safety" for each of the following years: 1960, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1966, and 1967. Since our training is voluntary, I'm not sure that we can better that record unless sometime in the future we change to a compulsory program. The number of students trained each year seems to have leveled off at about 77-7800. Last fiscal year, our agents spent 1,095 hours, and drove 6,243 miles while engaged in Hunter Safety training. During that same period, they certified 7,795 safe hunters.

There is little that I can add to the above. I am sure that every state that approaches this subject with a voluntary plan has similar experiences and problems. The success or failure will depend on the attitude, interest, ability and (since much of the instruction is conducted at night, without overtime pay, in Missouri at least) the dedication of the personnel assigned to the project. We feel that our conservation agents, considering their over-all work load, have done an outstanding job.

Hunter Safety may well be one of the most important fields of endeavor in the next few months or years because of the demands for rigid gun controls. Every time a firearms accident occurs, someone wants to pass another law. However, this is not the reason for such training. If we have prevented one serious injury or saved one life through our efforts, then we have been successful regardless of how good or how bad the over-all program may appear on paper.

We would certainly like to express our appreciation and thanks to the NRA and especially to Mr. Mate for the cooperation, understanding and assistance given us through the first ten years of our efforts in the Hunter Safety field.

If you have questions about our program, I will be happy to attempt to answer them.

HUNTER SAFETY TRAINING AND CONSERVATION EDUCATION

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Of all the challenges facing conservationists today none are greater than the challenge of developing a line of communication which will arouse the public from an apathetic unconcern for the natural world in which they live to an active role in the preservation and wise use of their environment. If words would do the job this would be an entirely different world. Streams would flow pure and unspoiled, forests and farm lands would be in a state of unparalleled production of items of commerce and wildlife. Conservationists of every denomination could concentrate on discovering, developing, safe guarding, producing and administrating in their chosen field assured that their efforts would accomplish their aims.

Unfortunately words alone, regardless of how well used, will not do the job. What we write or speak is heeded only by those who wish to listen, who are already convinced and are seeking reinforcement of their views. This convention is an excellent example of our closed circuit propaganda mill. On the rare occasion the "word" does leave the pristine society of true believers in the holy words of conservation, ecology, ethology, wildlife management, pollution abatement and all the rest, if falls on the unhearing ears of an adult society whose attitudes have been formed, thoughts crystallized and goals established. What pliability remains is constantly battered by the sights and sounds of an advertising industry which shrewdly exploits every media for attention in search of the almighty dollar. In this arena the conservationist is just another huckster, his ideals and goals maybe lofty but his aims by no means grant him special compensation for public attention.

Lets change the approach and escape this treadmill and see what can be done to reach an audience which will listen and develop a means of communication which is understood. The audience we seek is the youth of the country and the means of communication is involvement. Sight and hearing as learning senses serve as introducers, only the lesson is retained through the exercise of doing. How often when a youngster is introduced to a new object he says "show me" and reaches out his hands? This simply is involvement. Hunter Safety Training is an excellent tool to begin the involvement of youth in conservation activities. Frequently we're inclined to place all our emphasis on the mechanical techniques of gun handling and safety precautions. As a matter of fact the four hours covered in the basic hunter safety course is barely adequate as an introduction to the "How" of hunting. To stop at this stage is a disservice to the student whose appetite has been whetted with the meat of the meal no where in sight.