



Cornell University Cooperative Extension Washington County

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4-H Shooting Sports Wraps Up Its 19th Year!

April 7 marked the Fun Day for the two 4-H Shooting Sports programs that meet in Washington County. The Northern Program meets at Hudson Falls Fish & Game, while the Southern Program meets at the Salem Rifle & Pistol Club or the Owlkill Rod & Gun depending on the program. Currently, they get together on the last Saturday of the program to shoot muzzleloaders, shotguns, and rifles at Hudson Falls Fish & Game.

A total of 45 youth enrolled in the program that meets every Wednesday for 10 weeks and several Saturdays of at least five hours. During the 40 plus hour program the youth earn their Sportsman Education and Bowhunter Education certificates. Those that completed the entire program also receive a 4-H Shooting Sports certificate. That means that around 1800 hours of firearms safety and skills were taught during this year alone!

The program starts by developing a firearms and archery safety foundation. The basic rules of safety include the following:

- Do not handle a firearm or bow that does not belong to you without permission.
- Before you take control of a firearm, be sure that it is unloaded!
- Use a two-handed carrying method that keeps fingers away from the trigger.
- Control the muzzle at all times. In a room of students, the safest direction is toward the ceiling.

- Keep your finger off the trigger.
- Wear eye and ear protection for use of firearms. Archery does not require these but may require a shooting glove or tab and an arm guard.
- Match the arrows or ammunition to the bow or firearm.
- Always be sure of your target and what is beyond it!

Once again the youth who represented much of Washington County proved to be up to the challenge. They learned the safe use of recurve & compound bows, muzzleloaders, .22 rifles, air rifles, air pistols, and shotguns while working to make themselves more proficient in shooting technique. The students generally include about 10-20 % females and these young ladies consistently prove to be the equal of male students.

This program would not be possible without the assistance of many volunteer 4-H Shooting Sports instructors, DEC instructors, parents, and general volunteers. The clubs who allow this program the use of their facilities sacrifice a great amount of time for this program and they and their members should be thanked for that sacrifice.

Washington County 4-H Shooting Sports will be celebrating its 20th Anniversary in the winter of 2008. If you have a youth that will be twelve as of the second week of February 2008 and who has an interest in shooting or hunting, be sure to sign them up soon after December 1 as the class size is limited.

If you have any questions about this program or any other programs of Cornell Cooperative Extension's 4-H program, please call John Bowe at 746-2560.

Photo 1: Sarah Wrigley fires a .50 caliber muzzleloader during the Fun Day wrap up at the end of the annual 4-H Shooting Sports program. Photo by John Bowe

Photo 2: Bob Henke, 4-H Shotgun Instructor, works with Tad Smith on the basic principals of hitting moving targets. Photo by John Bowe