

## Iowa YHEC New Coaches Outline

This is being written to help new YHEC coaches prepare individuals or teams for their first year at the Challenge. Yes, Challenge. The 'C' in YHEC stands for challenge, not competition. It is to be a personal challenge where individuals work to improve their skills and knowledge which hopefully will last them a life time. It needs to be looked at as a learning event. Yes, there are trophies and it is more fun to bring them home than watch others leave with them but it is the knowledge brought home that really counts.

As in the preparation for any event the more you practice likely the better you will do. However, you can prepare a team to go to YHEC and be at least comfortable that some one spent time with them in preparation for as little as one hour per event. One of the keys to a successful practice is to see that the youth (and coaches) are having fun. If everyone finds shooting clay birds is fun, spend a few more minutes there which may help a less appealing topic seem more tolerable so everyone returns to practice.

A practice location does not have to be fancy. A safe place to shoot rifle and muzzle-loader with a good backstop is perfect. An open area for clay birds, to set up archery targets, or an orienteering course will work for all three. For safety trail if you have access to a small wooded or grassy area to set up either Delta style of paper targets in a walk through course will work. The written portion and wildlife ID can actually be held inside and a good use of practice time in case of bad weather.

Lastly, a coach does not have to know everything, A few inquiries may bring out a number of people who may not want to coach but they are more than willing to donate their time to share specific information. More on this later. As a coach if you have a location to practice and lay out a practice schedule you are well on your way.

Event specific items: This is an effort to add a little clarity to the rules, what to expect and how to prepare a person so they are at least comfortable.

### **Hunter Responsibility Exam:**

Don't you hate that word Exam! It spooks a lot of youth but actually it is not that bad, multiple choice, T/F, maybe pictures. In any case even if they do not know an answer they can still guess well. I do not know that anyone has ever gotten every question right or any individual who has missed them all. There are several books where the questions may be drawn from but if you have a copy of the Hunters Guide and the Iowa Hunter Student manual they will provide you the basic knowledge you need to share. The Hunters Guide is available from the Iowa DNR by contacting Donise Petersen as noted on the YHEC forms. The local Recreational Safety Officer (RSO) should have Student manuals.

The Hunters Guide is about an inch thick and if you pass it out and tell them to go read it, it is not likely to happen. It might work to pull a few questions from the material and ask the youth to find the answers. Such as, How many pounds of salt does it take to cure a bear hide? Or ask them to come back with questions for you. Hopefully this breaks up the monotony of reading and creates interest. You may find people that love this information and will read it over and over. Remember, the only hard question is the one you don't know the answer for.

The Hunter Responsibility test is important for a couple of reason. First it is an excellent learning opportunity and second it is used for the tie breaker if needed for the other events.

### **Hunter Safety Trail Challenge:**

This is a pretend hunt. The youth are given a pretend license for the challenge so they will need to be familiar with Iowa hunting laws as well as a certain amount of wildlife ID to know what animal they are being asked about. Some examples of the detail of laws required: Turkey hens legal in fall but not spring unless with a beard, coyote and wood chuck legal with either a hunting or fur harvester license, and knowledge of protected species for a few. They will carry dummy guns with dummy ammo and be expected to load and unload as needed when crossing fences, through gates or meeting others. They will also need to pick up the supplies they need, without assistance, before walking the trail as well as ask permission from a land owner.

The course usually follows a trail through the woods with stops along the way in almost a park like setting. The animals are typically Delta style foam targets that are positioned off the trail but if you can find anything that could represent an animal it would work. We practice at our local Ike's where there are woods and a trail and no one gets upset if carrying firearms. A park would be an excellent choice except for the firearms. Typically the question will end with 'would you take this shot?' At that point if they are going to shoot they are expected to shoulder the gun and pull the trigger so there is no question they shot. We coach youth that before they pull the trigger they need to ask themselves 3 questions: Is it safe? Is it legal? Is it ethical? If all answers are Yes, take the shot, you can lose points by not shooting as well.

I can provide some examples of pretend licenses and an old script of questions we used at one of our practices if anyone interested: [loren\\_zaruba@hotmail.com](mailto:loren_zaruba@hotmail.com)

### **Hunting/Wildlife Identification Challenge:**

Once again the Hunters Guide provides considerable information here, but equally important are Iowa laws. Many questions have been multiple part such as: Where in the state is it legal to hunt this animal, the legal bag limit and season dates (in months)? If they can not ID the animal the rest of the questions is pretty tough. Examples of objects may be pelts, wings, whole mounted birds, track casts, tuft of fur on a fence or various animal signs such as a chewed on stick. Practicing using the laws as a guide to animals is a good start how ever there may be questions on non-game animals as well, such as snakes or song birds. Once again I do not believe anyone has ever gotten all questions right or all questions wrong but it is a great event for learning.

For practice you may want to call your local county conservation office and ask for the naturalist or the person they utilize for their educational programs. Tell them what you are doing and ask if you can set up a time for a presentation. Your local DNR officer may be another source of information, either their own personal knowledge or being able to refer you to others for assistance. It seems to work well when some one is explaining the animal ID that you have a set of laws handy to discuss seasons and limits. Local trappers usually have excellent knowledge of animal sign and may be another source.

### **Hunting Orienteering Skill Challenge:**

This is perhaps one of the tougher events to prepare people for, but with that said I think it is tough for all. It will require basic math which concerns some youth and covers a number of different topics from using a map and map symbols on one questions and following a course on the next. Using the number of steps taken to determine distance, dealing with small print on a compass dial and just the fact of dealing with a compass while holding a clipboard and still being able to think and focus. It is also an

event with surprises. The youth with their eyes glassed over through practice many times will end up with high score for team.

There is a lot of good information available some times to the extent of being too much. Once again the Hunters Guide has some information regarding orienteering. However, 'Be an Expert with a Map and Compass' by Bjorn Kjellstrom as noted in the rules provides a very good source of information to train from, especially for the first year. Once again this is a lot of reading. I condensed information from Kjellstrom's book into a 7 page outline plus a list of map symbols. This outline will get you through most of the map questions and is basic enough if you have a topographic map you can cover in not a lot of time, available from: loren\_zaruba@hotmail.com Topographic maps can be purchased through the US Geological Survey, Denver, CO 80225. If you buy a topographic map it is best get the laminated style not only for protection but you can use dry erase markers on them for various exercises.

For the practical compass portion of this event you may want to look for a Boy Scout leader for some help or possibly some retired military. They should be able to help with taking a bearing, heading, triangulation. In the book 'Be an Expert with Map and Compass' an exercise called the 'Line Game' is noted. This is a very good practical exercise for not only headings but pacing distance. There will typically be a 100' area marked off at the challenge where youth can check their paces just before the event.

### **Hunting Archery Challenge:**

This event is typically the same as a 3-D archery shoot. The equipment is all state owned and is moving to more Genesis bows and away from recurve bows. The youth will need to pick out their own equipment including arrows. Some coaching on how to select straight arrows versus bent would be beneficial. They may or may not have tabs and arm guards so it is wise to bring your own.

If you do not have bow equipment check with your local RSO to see if you may borrow for practice. This is an event that the youth seem to really enjoy and practice makes the difference especially since it is instinctive shooting. It is important to shoot at various distances, elevations and angles. While most targets have been in the 10 to 15 yard range it is important to practice the entire range noted in the rules from 5 to 40 yards. When coaching focus on the basics, stance, breath control, smooth release and follow through.

You may want to check with your local archery club for volunteers to assist in coaching. Better yet see if they would let you use their range. Without delta style targets you can certainly still practice with a bag target but it will be important that the youth know the kill zone. In most cases it is visible but can be more difficult on the longer shots.

### **Hunting Muzzleloader and Light Rifle Challenge:**

There are some basics here that apply to both so will address the same. Breath control and trigger squeeze always top the list but also shooting positions are key. Every year I see youth struggle to get comfortable with prone position and shooting with a rest or shooting sticks. These should be the easiest shots but they seem to make them the most difficult.

Specifics:

#### **Muzzleloader:**

The muzzleloaders used have a double set trigger. It will be explained at the event but if possible to find one to practice with it will make a difference. The back trigger is the set trigger which turns the front trigger into a 'hair trigger' that requires only a touch to go off. Many times youth will touch it too

soon before centered on the target and end up with a miss. The muzzleloader will fire by only pulling the front trigger but it takes more force and can pull the sight off the target. If you cannot find a set trigger model to practice with you may suggest the youth stay with the front trigger only at the challenge.

Other wise just getting youth used to the heavier barrel weight, boom and smoke is what is needed. They will be using different muzzleloaders at this event but all have been sighted in by one person and they have had a diagram for the sight picture shown prior to shooting. The targets are life size paper with kill zones marked.

### **Rifle:**

Standard bolt action 22's are used. Typically the youth will have the same rifle throughout the event. These have not been sighted in by one person so they normally allow for some sighting in shots before the scoring begins to determine where the rifle is shooting. At practice it will be good to discuss/practice on adjusting your aim point pending the sights and where the rifle is shooting. Make sure the youth does not adjust their aim during the practice or they will be all over the target. Keep the same sight picture and see where their group is at. Practice for rifle is pretty basic and any range with good backstop should work on paper targets. At the challenge they may be shooting at a wide variety of targets and size but if they can hit the bulls eye on a paper target they will be in good shape.

If there is an issue on getting rifles, check with your RSO what may be available for the local hunter ed classes as they will likely be the same as used at the challenge.

### **Hunting Shotgun Challenge:**

This is a sporting clay style event so anything you can do for trick targets for practice after learning to hit straight-aways will be good. As per the rules the gun butt needs to be off shoulder and they may require it to be on safe. This is important for practice.

The shotgun challenge changes every year. In previous years shooters may be positioned in a ground blind with settling targets coming at them, standing in duck blind, or sitting on the ground. Typically, there are some rabbit targets, as well as straight-away, crossing shots and report doubles. If you have a sporting clays course close and have the resources to shoot there it would be great but if not you can practice many of the targets thrown with a small spring loaded thrower or hand thrower. With a little practice you can throw a rabbit target with a hand thrower, the trick is to throw overhand.

The participants will select their shotgun of choice, usually without much coach intervention. There will be a variety of youth, adult, slide action or semi auto. Some coaching may be in order so they chose wisely based on their size and targets being thrown.

Also, in all of the firearms shooting events eye protection and hearing protection is required. Hopefully, at your practices this is standard procedure but it is important they are used to it.

Beyond the basic practice:

Make sure you encourage parents to be a part of YHEC. When the parents are part of the program the youth tend to stay involved. The parents, even if not involved in shooting sports, can still help with crowd control or transportation. You may also find some good expertise for preparing for an event. Parents are welcome and encouraged to attend the YHEC event in June.

By now you have certainly figured out there are costs associated with YHEC. If you ask and take the time to explain what you are doing you may find a number of local groups willing to provide financial support. We usually ask a full sponsor to cover the entry cost for the team. We also ask the participants/parents to contribute towards shells and targets. Typically this amount is around \$40 which also helps pay for a T shirt. Coaches also pay this fee since as the sponsorship money does not always cover all costs.

There are several opportunities for supplies. Federal has a program for 20 ga shells and 22's at a reduced cost, with the stipulation they must be used for youth programs. Our local gun club sells us clay bird of all descriptions at a very reasonable cost. You may even be able to go to the local gun club and pick up thrown clay birds for free.

Lastly, but most important. Safety is number one, always will be, with no exceptions! Typically there are no problems because those involved want to be there and understand safety concerns. In 24 years at our local practices we have only sent one person home because of poor firearm handling.