

# No Child Left Indoors®



## ***A Guide to Mentored Hunts***

*Sharing Our Hunting Heritage and  
Outdoor Traditions*



## The Habitat Organizations

### Mission Statement:

*Pheasants Forever & Quail Forever are dedicated to the conservation of pheasants, quail and other wildlife through habitat improvements, public awareness, education and land management policies and programs.*



# **OBJECTIVE**

*Our **No Child Left Indoors**® initiative is our effort to work with members, chapters and conservation partners to provide opportunities for youth and their families to share our outdoor traditions and develop a conservation ethic.*



*Our mentored hunt program provides first time or novice hunters with an introduction to our hunting heritage; hopefully creating a new generation of hunting conservationists and land stewards.*

# Table of Contents

## **PLANNING A YOUTH MENTORED HUNT**

Selecting the Date .....	6
Selecting the Site .....	6

## **WILD BIRD HUNT VS PEN-RAISED BIRD HUNT**

Option A: Wild Bird Hunt .....	7
Option B: Pen-Raised Bird Hunt .....	7

## **SELECTING YOUTH, VOLUNTEERS & MENTORS FOR YOUR EVENT**

How Many Youth? .....	8
Selecting Participants .....	8
Event Volunteers .....	9
Mentor Selection & Responsibilities .....	9
Dog Handlers and Dogs .....	9

## **VOLUNTEER AND INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION**

### **YOUTH MENTOR HUNT TRAINING ACTIVITIES**

Training Stations .....	10
-------------------------	----

### **MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION**

Insurance and Waivers .....	13
Promoting the Event .....	13
Hats and Vests .....	13
Disposable Cameras .....	14
Thank You Notes .....	14
Post Event Reporting .....	14
Participant Surveys .....	14
Miscellaneous Food and Supplies List .....	14

### **ATTACHMENTS (see flash drive provided at Focus on Forever)**

Member Volunteer Form	
Volunteer/Contact Information Sheet	
Guidelines for Protecting Kids, Volunteers & Our Chapters	
EDOC Style of Instruction	
TABK = Rules of Firearm Safety	
Mock Hunt Activity	
Volunteer Insurance Coverage – Events Involving Firearms	
Firearms Event Participant Waiver	
No Child Left Indoors® Merchandise Sheet	
No Child Left Indoors® Event Report Form	
Participant Evaluation	
Federal Premium Ammunition Order Form	
Ammo Match Grant Request Form	

## ***PLANNING A MENTORED HUNT***

The planning of a mentored hunt is the most important part of providing a safe and rewarding experience for everyone involved. It is a good idea to start planning the event at least six months in advance.

Forming a *Youth Hunt Committee* is the first step in planning the event. Put together a planning team that is passionate about sharing our hunting heritage with youth and families. It is important to work with a group of volunteers that are diverse in skills and committed to hosting a high quality event.

Choosing a Hunt Coordinator is the next step. The Hunt Coordinator will serve as the main point of contact for the entire event and is responsible for the general organization of the mentored hunt.

Involving staff from state conservation agencies early on in the planning is a good idea. They will be able to make sure the event complies with all state regulations and will be helpful partners.

When planning the mentored hunting experience, committee members, mentors and volunteers should ask themselves “why do I hunt?” or “what do I enjoy most about hunting?”

In most cases, comments like the following will come up:

- Spending time with family and friends
- Watching good bird dogs
- Field lunches
- Spending time outdoors
- Beautiful scenery
- Viewing wildlife
- Providing good quality meat for the table
- Having FUN!

In addition to providing a safe mentored hunt, you should strive to provide novice hunters with experiences such as those mentioned above.

Never should a first hunting experience include watching pen-raised birds being planted in narrow strips of poor cover, birds being released from traps or thrown by hand into the air to be shot, or being rushed out of the field so the next group of hunters can start the next “hunt.”

### **Selecting the Date(s)**

When selecting the date for your event, take into consideration the species being hunted, seasonal weather patterns, school calendars, annual community events, special youth hunting season opportunities and volunteer availability.

You may want to consider holding your event on *National Hunting & Fishing Day* which is annually observed on the fourth Saturday of September. Doing so may add more significance to the event and take advantage of additional media coverage.

### **Selecting the Site**

Selecting the site for your event will be one of the more important factors that influence the success of your event. Here are a few guidelines to consider:

- The site should have enough classrooms/buildings where the entire group can get out of the weather and take part in various training sessions without disrupting other groups. A good rule of thumb to operate under is: *the more room, the better*.
- Consider traffic, parking, restroom facilities, meal service, classrooms, etc.
- Selecting the fields or hunting areas is also important to the event's success. There needs to be a large enough area to handle groups with hunters, mentors and a dog handler at one time.
- Hunting areas should be laid out so groups cannot see one another while hunting or are located a long distance between groups. There are plenty of distractions for the youth hunter already; watching another group hunt and shoot should not be one of them.
- Always plan for safety when selecting the hunting fields and clay target shooting area. Planning for worst case scenarios will make you better prepared.
- Make sure you are hunting in the best available habitat for the species you are hunting. You want to provide opportunity for success.
- If you are using pen-raised birds, select fields that provide quality habitat for the species you are hunting and make sure the bird planters put birds in "birdy" cover.

## ***WILD BIRD HUNT VS PEN-RAISED BIRD HUNT***

Whether it's on pheasants, quail, sharptail grouse, ruffed grouse or some other upland bird, the most preferred option for conducting a mentor hunt is to arrange for enough locations to allow for a wild bird hunting experience. Make sure to check your state's regulations for youth hunting opportunities or special "learn to hunt" seasons that your chapter can take part in.

### ***Option A: Wild Bird Hunt***

The wild bird hunt is preferred over the use of pen-raised birds as it allows for:

- Mentors and participants to hunt together in a more relaxed setting with additional time and opportunity to share experiences.
- The hunt to take place without many of the time constraints you find in other scenarios.
- The hunt to take place during special youth seasons when the maximum number of wild birds are present and without pressure from other hunters.
- Participants to experience a fair chase, wild bird hunting adventure.
- Less work and cost associated with regulations, purchasing birds, planting birds, selecting fields and the public perception of hunting pen-raised birds.

The success of the event should be measured by the quality of the hunting experience and not the number of shots taken or birds harvested.

### ***Option B: Pen-Raised Bird Hunt***

If conditions are such that providing a wild bird hunt is too difficult or your chapter elects to conduct a pen-raised bird hunt, every attempt should be made to make the hunt as “natural” as possible. Since the bird hunt is a highlight of the entire event, it will also be the activity that can open your event to criticism. Please bear this in mind when planning and conducting your event.

Restrictions when using pen-raised birds:

- *Be sure to be in compliance with all state regulations when using pen-raised birds for mentor hunts.*
  - In many states the event must be conducted at a hunting preserve or on private lands with state issued permits.
- *Bird releasers or launchers must not be used to hold and then release birds.*
  - Using bird releasers or launchers may not portray hunting as an ethical and fair chase activity to the participants or the general public. One of the most important goals of your mentor hunt should be to provide a positive, ethical hunting experience.
- *The bird's ability to move about the field may not be inhibited in any way.*
  - Fair chase is an important part of hunting ethics. Inhibiting the ability of birds to move freely about the field is not allowing fair chase. Your mentor hunt will be the first hunting experience for most of the participants. Every effort should be made to ensure the day is a fun, safe, ethical and positive experience.
- *The location of the bird in the field should not be marked in any way.*
  - Marking the location of the planted or released birds will take away from the overall experience of the hunt. Knowing where the birds are located takes the “hunt” out of “hunting.”

- *Precautions should be taken in the planting/releasing of birds.*
  - The planting or releasing of birds should be done prior to the arrival of the youth. It should never be visible to the participants.
  - There are a variety of techniques used for planting birds. Make sure to discuss these techniques prior to the event. It is a good idea to use experienced bird planters for mentor hunts.
  - It is a good idea to have 2-way radios (or cell phones) at the event to communicate when birds are planted and the fields are ready for a group of hunters.

When conducting a mentor hunt using pen-raised birds it is critical to take every precaution to make the experience of the hunt as natural as possible. Give careful selection to:

- Site selection
- Habitat type
- Size of hunting area
- Quality and health of birds being used
- When, where and how birds are released
- Sex of birds allowed to be harvested (it is good practice to require target identification when hunting pheasants).

## ***SELECTING YOUTH, VOLUNTEERS & MENTORS***

### **How Many Youth?**

For chapters that are conducting their first mentor hunt, it is recommended that you have no more than 15 participants. One of the most important goals you should have at your first mentor hunt is to make certain the hunt is successful, fun and under control. Having a small number of participants will help meet each of those goals. As your chapter completes additional successful events, the number of participants may increase relative to the number of adults available to help.

The goal of your event should NOT be to conduct the biggest event possible; it should always be to conduct the BEST event possible.

### **Selecting Participants**

Be certain to check state regulations for minimum age and hunter safety training requirements for participants of mentored hunts. It is always a good idea to limit participation to participants who have completed an approved Hunter Safety Education Program.

In general, your chapter should strive to enroll participants that have an interest in hunting but limited opportunity. Examples might include youth from a single parent family or a family where the relatives do not hunt. Enrolling youth that have already been hunting or are children of people that actively hunt is not meeting the primary objective of the program.

Conservation Officers and Hunter Safety Instructors from your area can be one of the best sources to determine eligible participants for your event. In most cases they will have a list of recent hunter safety graduates and know which of those youth would be most appropriate for the mentored hunt.

### **Event Volunteers**

The number of adults needed to properly conduct an event is usually 1.5 – 2 times the number of youth in attendance. When you consider the number of mentors, dog handlers, instructors, cooks, etc. needed to conduct the event, it requires a large number of volunteers.

Using the *Membership Volunteer Form (see attachments)* to help recruit volunteers throughout the year may help. When requesting help, don't limit yourself to people that are current members of your chapter. Youth events are a great way to engage and recruit new members.

### **Mentor Selection and Responsibilities**

**Every event should be conducted with mentors at a 1:1 ratio with participants.** The program is designed for mentors to be paired with hunters at the start of the event and remain with them throughout the entire program. Ultimately, mentors will share personal experiences and knowledge regarding our hunting heritage and outdoor traditions.

If the day is just about a mentor shuttling the hunter from one bird to the next, we have missed a great opportunity. The day should be about sharing the outdoor traditions we cherish with a youth that has an interest in hunting.

Finding both male and female mentors is important. Not only will involving female mentors increase the quality of the event but it also serves as a great way to encourage more of their involvement in other chapter activities.

***Who is NOT a mentor?*** A mentor should not be the parent or relative of a hunter. The relationship and dynamics of the event are quite different if a youth is paired with an adult who is a relative. In the same manner, parents should not be involved during the hunting aspect of the event. Allowing more people into the hunting situation will only create more distractions and potentially unsafe situations.

The definition of a mentor is – *a wise advisor; teacher or coach*. Make sure to choose your mentors carefully, they are critical to the success of the event. In fact, you should limit the number of participants to the number of GREAT mentors you have available.

### **Dog Handlers & Dogs**

Experience shows that plenty of dog handlers and good dogs are needed at each event. Make certain each dog handler knows how many times he or she will be going into the field and the duration of each hunt to determine if additional dogs are needed.

Mentor hunts should NOT be used as dog training opportunities for dog handlers. Only the most experienced dogs should be involved in the event. Young, inexperienced dogs are not a good mix with young, inexperienced hunters.

The Dog Handler is in complete control of the actual hunting situation. If there is going to be an unsafe situation at an event, the hunt is likely where it will happen. Dog handlers should take the time to meet with each group just prior to the hunt to lay out the following ground rules:

1. Explain exactly how the hunt will take place and how the cover is laid out.
2. Introduce the dog to the group and explain how the dog will work.
3. Re-enforce to the mentors exactly what their role is during the hunt (enforce the four rules of firearm safety at all times and offer encouragement).
4. Re-emphasize important safety rules and concerns.
5. Outline how it is determined who gets to shoot at a flushed bird (this is also the time to determine if hunters are allowed more than one shot or to back up other shooters).

## ***Volunteer & Instructor Information***

In most cases the majority of the mentors, instructors and other volunteers associated with the mentor hunt will not be trained or certified instructors. In an effort to provide quality instruction and a safe environment, it is suggested that you share the following attachments with appropriate event staff:

- ***PF & QF Youth Protection Guidelines***  
The primary purpose of these guidelines is to help provide a safe environment for youth at PF & QF sponsored events. Sharing these guidelines with all volunteers will help minimize risk to youth, volunteers and chapters when conducting youth events.
- ***E.D.O.C. Style of Instruction***  
All people, adults included, learn best in one of three primary ways: hearing, seeing or doing. Following the simple guidelines provided on this attachment will help instructors reach more students.
- ***T.A.B.K. = Four Rules of Firearm Safety***  
This simple acronym will help instructors and students remember the four rules of firearm safety.

## ***Mentor Hunt Training Activities***

It is recommended that mentor hunt programs provide a minimum of four hours of instruction on a variety of topics. Chapters that want to provide the highest quality event should consider a multi-day program that includes a number of high quality training days followed by the hunt on another day.

During training exercises, hunters and mentors should be divided into small groups and then conduct concurrent training sessions throughout the day. This allows the groups to go through training sessions with fewer distractions, more hands-on learning and more interaction between mentors and youth.

Training activities should be hands-on as much as possible. Participants will have more fun and learn better if they can actually hear, see and take part in skill based activities.

At a minimum, training should include all of the following stations:

### ***Station 1 – Safety Course and Landowner Appreciation***

The safety course is a walking route that each youth takes with their mentor. Along the route, the young hunter will have the opportunity to practice safe firearm carries, target identification, safe zones of fire and the opportunity to make moral or ethical decisions in the field. See the *Mock Hunt Activity (see attachments)* for an example of how to set up a safety course. The more realistic you can make the scenarios the more beneficial they will be.

The safety course is an opportune time to teach how to ask a landowner permission to hunt. Creating a scenario where the youth can role play approaching and interacting with a landowner will be a valuable component of this training session. Prior to encountering the landowner, the mentor should highlight a few points with the youth:

- Offer their hand and a smile during introduction
- Share your name and where you are from
- Tell the landowner what and when you would like to hunt
- Tell the landowner if you will be hunting alone or with others
- Ask about livestock, field entrances or other concerns on the property
- Ask the landowner if he has any suggestions on where to go
- Offer to share any game taken
- Properly thank the landowner

### ***Station 2 – Firearm Safety & Shooting Instruction***

It is important that a Firearm Safety Instructor leads this session with a review of gun safety rules. The Firearm Safety Instructor should command this session and ensure that range rules apply.

Following the safety review, it would be appropriate for a shooting instructor to give some simple tips on shooting clay birds. Shooting Instructors should be certified in one of the following courses: DNR Scholastic Clay Target Program, NRA Coach Training Program, 4H Shooting Sports Program or the National Sporting Clays/Skeet/Trap Associations.

Make sure to plan for plenty of time at this station. Participants may have never shot a gun before or will be unfamiliar with the gun they are using. The confidence and general safety aspects gained by spending more time shooting will be worth it.

Participants sent to the field having failed to successfully break any clay birds will have a low level of confidence which may keep them from successfully completing the hunt. By building flex time into the shooting skills portion of the day you can spend more time with those who need extra training and attention.

Rushing through the shooting station with a predetermined number of shots is not the way to instill confidence or build skills. Take the time to work with those needing more shooting skills, confidence and safety instruction...it will be worth it in the long run.

In addition, it is a good idea to have several youth sized shotguns available for those that do not have a gun that fits properly. Guns that are not suitable for the event are guns that do not fit the shooter, guns with hammers or guns in poor condition. Hammer guns are unsafe in the hands of inexperienced, excited youth.

### ***Station 3 – Dog Training, Handling and an Introduction to Various Hunting Breeds***

This station is always a favorite and is a great place to partner with a local dog hunting club. Selecting a competent trainer and avid hunter to lead this session is crucial:

- Not only must they be knowledgeable of basic and advanced training techniques; but most important, they must be able to build rapport with participants.
- Basic obedience needed for a capable hunting dog is the foundation of this session.
- Demonstrations are ideal and involving the youth makes it memorable.
- If at all possible, show and describe a variety of pointing and flushing breeds. Allow plenty of time for questions and sharing.
- Demonstrations of proper field work/quarterming, whistle commands, steady on point, retrieving, etc... are suggested as time allows.

### ***Station 4 – The Game Species & Hunting 101***

This is where you will introduce the species of upland bird being hunted, its habitat and biology, hunting strategies, special rules or regulations, etc. Involving Wildlife Biologists and experienced hunters will add value and credibility to this station.

#### **Additional Stations**

Having additional stations will keep everyone busy and increase learning opportunities. Additional stations may include:

- Patterning Guns
- Gun Cleaning & Care
- Learning How to Determine Land Ownership (plat books)
- Finding Public Lands to Hunt
- How to Reload Shotgun Shells
- Field First-Aid Training
- Veterinary Care
- Cleaning, Care and Cooking of Wild Game

Use your imagination to develop fun, interactive sessions that engage participants and share a passion for the outdoors.

## ***MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION***

### **Insurance and Waivers**

Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever maintain a general liability policy for all chapters in good standing for activities and work within the scope of the mission of Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever.

In addition, liability coverage for adult volunteers can be provided at no charge by simply completing the *Volunteer Insurance Coverage – for Events Involving Firearms* (see attachments). The form must be completed and received at the PF/QF National Headquarters prior to the event taking place.

Each mentor hunt participant must complete the *PF/QF Firearms Event Participant Waiver* (see attachments). This form requires the signature of both the youth and the parent/guardian.

### **Promoting the Event**

All strong chapters have two similar characteristics: strong leadership and an investment in their local community. Few activities can help recruit enthusiastic leaders and provide a local investment like a youth mentor hunt. **MAKE SURE YOU SHARE THE STORY:**

- Alert the media
  - Contact your local newspaper, tv and radio stations. Give them the date, location, time and summary of the event.
  - Let them know the best time to attend the event for photo opportunities and interviews.
  - Ask them if there is anything you can do to help tell the story.
- Promote the event at fundraising banquets
  - After your event is concluded, make sure your chapter uses the photographs and video footage collected at the event to make an impressive display for your next banquet or other community event.
- Invite dignitaries
  - Asking important members of the community, chapter sponsors, elected officials or other dignitaries to attend your event will help increase media attention.
- Have youth participants attend your banquet
  - Invite the youth from your event to attend your next banquet. Offer them free banquet tickets and a youth membership if they wear their event hat and hunting vest to the banquet.

By promoting your event through web sites, photos, newspaper articles, radio spots and displays you'll be letting members and non-members alike know what you're accomplishing for the youth in your community. You may find out that you have more volunteers, members, donors and sponsors in your area than ever before.

### **Hats and Vests**

Each mentor hunt participant should be provided a blaze orange hat and upland hunting vest. The hat and vest can be ordered from the ***No Child Left Indoors® Merchandise Sheet*** (see attachments) at a special chapter price.

### **Disposable Cameras**

You may want to consider providing each youth/mentor team a disposable camera to take photos with throughout the event. What better way to document activities, experiences and memories and then share them with their family and friends.

Write the name of each youth on the camera and collect them at the end of the event. Have duplicate photos processed. The chapter should keep one set and provide the other set to the youth. These photos can then be placed into a chapter scrapbook or made part of a display for the local banquet.

### **Thank You Notes**

Participating in a mentor hunt and hunting on private land is a privilege the participants should be thankful for. It is a good idea to have them write “thank you” notes to landowners, sponsors, mentors and dog handlers for their hard work and support of the program. Encourage them to include personal stories or thoughts. Group photos, feathers from their first bird or other small items included with the note make it more personal.

### **Post Event Reporting**

Sharing the stories of PF & QF sponsored youth events is not only important at the local level. It is critical for your event to be reported to the National PF & QF office by using the *No Child Left Indoors Report Form* (see attachments). This information is used to provide liability insurance for chapters and volunteers, report accomplishments, secure grants and donations and share YOUR stories at the national level.

### **Participant Surveys**

Gathering post-event responses from participants is important when evaluating your event as well as qualifying for various grants. A *Participant Evaluation* can be found in the attachments or your chapter may want to create a customized survey for your event.

### **Miscellaneous Food and Supplies List:**

You will find that securing donations for many of the necessary items listed below can be pretty easy. Especially after you’ve established a successful program – many folks will want to be a part of a top-flight mentor hunt – and there are many items that can be donated:

- |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| -Food and Drinks for Breakfast/Lunch  | -Snacks and drinks throughout the event  |
| -Napkins/Plates/Spoons/Forks          | -First Aid Kits                          |
| -Trash Bags and Container             | -Tables/Chairs                           |
| -Grill/Charcoal/Lighter Fluid/Propane | -Use of ATV                              |
| -Game Loads                           | -Two Way Radios                          |
| -Clay Targets/Thrower                 | -Shotgun Cleaning Kits                   |
| -Hearing and Eye Protection           | -Ice and Coolers                         |
| -Disposable Cameras                   | -Freezer Bags and Bird Cleaning Supplies |
| -Hats/Vests/Prizes                    | -Youth Model Firearms                    |
| -Video Camera/Editing for final video | -Use of Private Land for Event           |



## ***CONGRATULATIONS AND THANK YOU!***

*You are about to participate in one of the most rewarding activities Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever can offer a volunteer – an opportunity to pass down the outdoor traditions we cherish and mentor the next generation of hunting conservationists and land stewards.*

If you have questions or comments contact Rich Wissink, National Youth Program Manager at 715-722-0286 or [rwissink@pheasantsforever.org](mailto:rwissink@pheasantsforever.org).

**Thank you for all you do as PF & QF volunteers. You are making a difference!**

## ***ATTACHMENTS***

***(See flash drive provided at Focus on Forever event)***

Draft Agendas

Member Volunteer Form

Volunteer/Contact Information Sheet

Guidelines for Protecting Kids, Volunteers & Our Chapters

EDOC Style of Instruction

TABK = Rules of Firearm Safety

Mock Hunt Activity

Volunteer Insurance Coverage – Events Involving Firearms

Firearms Event Participant Waiver

No Child Left Indoors® Merchandise Sheet

No Child Left Indoors® Event Report Form

Participant Evaluation