



LEARN-TO-HUNT SAFETY GUIDELINES

SAFE HUNTS ARE NOT AN ACCIDENT!

The following safety guidelines should be followed during all PF and QF learn-to-hunt events. Failure to do so may jeopardize chapter and volunteer liability protection.

- ✓ Waivers for “Events Involving Firearms” must be understood and signed by all participants, and legal guardians of minor participants, prior to any events involving the use of firearms. Chapters should keep copies of all completed waivers for at least 12 months.
- ✓ All participants should know and completely understand the Four Universal Rules for Firearm Safety:
 - o Treat every firearm as if it were loaded
 - o Always keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction
 - o Be certain of your target; and what is in front of and beyond the target
 - o Keep your finger out of the trigger guard until you are ready to shoot
- ✓ A hunting party should consist of ONLY three types of participants in the field at any given time:
 - o **Guide or Dog Handler** – the guide/dog handler is in charge of the hunt and handling of the dog; learn-to-hunt events are NOT dog training opportunities. Only well-trained dogs should be used for learn-to hunt events. Pointing breeds that are steady to wing and shot are strongly recommended and provide the safest scenario for people and dogs.
 - o **Mentor** – The mentor does NOT carry a firearm and is responsible for a specific hunter; the mentor must be within arms-reach of the hunter whenever the hunter is carrying a firearm. The ratio of mentors to hunters is 1:1.
 - o **Hunter** – PFQF learn-to-hunt participants must have completed hunter safety prior to taking part in our learn to hunt events. Doing so, provides a basic understanding of firearms and firearm safety. We cannot provide that firearm safety foundation in just one day.
- ✓ The desired number of people in the field at one time is three (1 dog handler, 1 mentor, 1 hunter); there should NEVER be more than five people (1 dog handler, 2 mentors, 2 hunters) in the field at one time.
- ✓ At no time should there be more than one hunting party in any field at the same time.
- ✓ The entire hunting scenario (dog, dog handler, hunter, mentor, flushing bird, safe zones of fire) should be explained and simulated during scenario-based training prior to the hunt taking place.
- ✓ Eye protection MUST be worn by every participant, guide, mentor, dog handler and anyone else accompanying a group in the field during a learn-to-hunt event. Hearing protection is strongly recommended.
- ✓ When flushing birds in front of “birdy” dogs (whether pointing or flushing), it is the HUNTER (with mentor behind and within arms-reach) who should flush the bird for the shot. NO ONE should go in front of the hunter(s) to flush birds. There is even risk to dogs (especially hard charging flushers) in front of novice hunters when birds are flushing.
- ✓ No shots should be taken at birds that fly out of safe zones of fire or fly back behind the line of hunters; and NEVER should people “duck” so shots can be taken. It is the MENTORS responsibility to prevent the hunter’s firearm from swinging out of safe zones of fire. Mentors should call and point out safe zones of fire when dogs are birdy.
- ✓ If at any time a mentor or dog handler feel a participant is too young or unsafe to participate, that hunter should be removed from the hunting activity immediately and provided additional training and practice. Taking part in the hunt is a privilege not a right.
- ✓ Chapters should NOT be concerned with providing events to large numbers of participants. It is much more rewarding for everyone involved to limit the number of participants to those that can be provided a SAFE and enjoyable introduction to our hunting heritage. It is difficult for any chapter to provide a safe environment and high-quality experience to more than 10-15 participants.
- ✓ Take the time to read and review the attached **Guide to Hosting a Learn-to-Upland Bird Hunt Event**.
- ✓ If you have questions, contact the PF and QF Hunting Heritage Program Manager
huntingheritage@pheasantsforever.org