

SHOOTING SPORTS INFORMATION – JEFFERSON COUNTY PROGRAM

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We pretty much follow the age guidelines set by the state for participation in our various shooting sports disciplines. The more advanced the shooting discipline, (equipment, skill, and also the degree of "danger" with the equipment), the higher the age is set.

Here are the State Match participation **4-H Age Criteria (age January 1 of current year)** (these are hard and fast for the State Match participation) followed by our Jefferson Co. project guidelines and policies:

- **BB Gun: 4-H Age 9-14.** (BB Gun is the only discipline with an upper age limit short of aging out of 4-H. Participation requires successful completion of our Basic Safety Course)
- **Air Rifle: 4-H Age 9-18** (We require participation in our Basic Safety Course and our BB gun project for at least one year for shooters under the age of 14 in 4-H age. The degree of difficulty for Air Rifle is much harder than BB gun and shooters must also be proficient in BB gun to advance to Air Rifle. For shooters 14 and up in 4-H age, we require the Basic Safety course for firearms and firing line safety.)
- **Air Pistol: 4-H Age 12-18** (We require participation in our Basic Safety Course, with most Air Pistol shooters coming in after they start shooting Air Rifle)
- **Archery: 4-H Age 8-18** (We start new shooters on bare bow low poundage recurve bows to teach archery fundamentals. Our club provides the basic equipment needed)
- **Hunting Skills: 4-H Age 9-18** (Note that in order to participate at the State Match in Hunting Skills, the Juniors (4-H Age 9-12) must also participate AND qualify in at least one Shooting Sports discipline for which they are eligible, typically BB or Archery. For Seniors (4-H Age 13-18 for Hunting Skills) to attend the State Match, they must also participate in Archery, Small Bore Rifle, and Shotgun projects, shoot at least one recognized qualifier match in each of these disciplines, AND qualify in at least one.)
- **Shotgun: 4H Age 12-18** (we strongly suggest completing our Basic safety course and/or hunters education)
- **Muzzle Loading Rifle: 4-H Age 12-18** (we strongly suggest completing our Basic Safety Course. Participation in Air Rifle is very helpful to build shooting skills)
- **Small Bore (.22) Rifle: 4-H Age 12-18** (we require our basic safety course AND participation in BB and air rifle with proficiency in air rifle before going to .22 rifle)
- **Small Bore (.22) Pistol: 4-H Age 13-18** (we require our basic safety course AND participation in Air Pistol for at least a year before advancing to .22 pistol)

I hope this helps with parent properly filling in project enrollment. **If it seems like nearly everything in our Jefferson County Shooting Sports is based on successful completion of our Basic Safety Course, followed by active participation for one year, or more, in our BB Gun program, it is.** We teach the fundamentals of SAFE GUN HANDLING, SHOOTING ON A CONTROLLED FIRING LINE, and MARKSMANSHIP skills in the Basis Safety Course and the participants actively practice these skills to become SAFE and ACCURATE shooters. These skills HAVE to be mastered before one moves on to more advanced disciplines that are also potentially much more dangerous if something goes wrong. By the time our members become good at BB gun for at least a year, if not more, depending on their age and their skills, then they can think about moving up the ladder in more advanced shooting disciplines, such as Air Rifle and Air Pistol. It is a graduated process for the younger shooters. If they want to really be successful in the more advanced disciplines, they will take the time to build the skills and safe gun handling early in their 4-H shooting careers, starting with BB Gun, which as you know, is very competitive and not beneath anyone.

In addition, we do not have the capacity in range space, equipment or time to handle safely and properly large numbers of shooters in more advanced disciplines such as Small Bore or Muzzle Loading, as we do in BB, Air Rifle/Air Pistol, or Archery.

So, if we have 10 years olds new to 4-H Shooting Sports sign up for Small Bore pistol, or Small Bore Rifle, they need to realize that they WILL NOT start there. They will have to go through the Basic Safety Course with at least several years of active participation and steady progress in their skills to earn their way into an advanced shooting discipline. Sorry it has to be this way, but SAFETY and TIME dictate the way we can run the program. I am certain that other county programs do the same.

If we have someone wanting to start 4-H Shooting Sports who is older that 4-H age 14, we really want them to take our one day Basic Safety Course, for again, the skills taught there introduce them to safety and marksmanship. Then we can work with them individually in Air Rifle or Air Pistol, as they would be too old to actively participate and compete in BB Gun.