

Hunting safety should be first priority

By Mike Stephens
mstephens@nwkansas.com

Hunter safety education is necessary "to keep the hunters safe," said Dick Kelly, Natural Resource Officer for Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism. A hunting education teaches hunters to be ethical, safe and knowledgeable. Besides, it's the law.

According to the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism website, kdwpt.state.ks.us, Kansas law requires that anyone born on or after July 1, 1957 be certified by an approved course in hunter education before they can hunt in Kansas.

"It keeps everyone associated with the hunt safe: family, friends, acquaintances and landowners on or near the property that they are hunting, safe," said Kelly.

There are, however, a couple of exceptions to the law. Anyone 15 years old and under may hunt without being certified if they are under the direct supervision of an adult 18 years old or older who is certified. Also, anyone 16 years old or older may purchase a one-time deferral of the hunter education requirements by purchasing an apprentice hunting license. The apprentice hunting license requires the holder to hunt under the supervision of an adult 18 years old or older. Hunters under the age of 11 can take the course but will be required to take the course again for certification after turning 11. A limited number of Kansas Hunter Education "crash" courses are available to non-residents only. A hunter education certificate issued by another state, Canadian province and some foreign countries are deemed to meet the requirements of Kansas law.

Hunter safety courses are offered in two different formats, a traditional classroom with instructors or an independent online course.

The traditional hunter education course is organized and conducted by volunteer

A Hunter's Pledge

Responsible hunting provides unique challenges and rewards. However, the future of the sport depends on each hunter's behavior and ethics. Therefore, as a hunter, I pledge to...

- Respect the environment and wildlife.
- Respect property and landowners.
- Show consideration for non-hunters.
- Hunt safely.
- Know and obey the law.
- Support wildlife and habitat conservation.
- Pass on an ethical hunting tradition.
- Strive to improve my outdoor skills and understanding of wildlife.
- Hunt only with ethical hunters.

By following these principles of conduct each time I go afield, I will give my best to the sport, the public, the environment and myself. The responsibility to hunt ethically is mine; the future of hunting depends on me.

instructors from across the state. By law, the course must be a minimum of 10 hours in length. Most courses generally average 12 hours of instruction over two or more days. Courses are offered throughout the year with the majority being from August to October. For more information go to kdwpt.state.ks.us for a current listing of all courses being offered throughout the state.

The internet-assisted course format is designed for people who don't have the time in their schedules to sit through the traditional classroom course, but it covers the same information covered in the classroom. Participants must have a computer and a printer in order to complete the online

portion of the course.

The independent study method is a three-part process. First, hunters must register for an Internet-assisted Hunter Education Field Day and Testing session. Second, participants must complete an online course within 90 days prior to the Field Day and Testing Session they have chosen. There are two options. One option is the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism free course at www.kdwpt.state.ks.us. The second option is one of the commercial courses. The commercial courses are offered because they are considered very good learning tools that are more technologically advanced than the Department of Wildlife course. HunterExam.

com offers a Kansas hunter education online course and field day qualifier exam certificate at a cost of \$24.95. Hunter-Ed.com also offers an online course at a cost of \$24.50. The third and final step, hunters must attend a Hunter Education Field Day and Testing Session. Upon arrival they must hand in all quiz results or your Kansas Field Day Qualifier Exam Certification. All students will be tested over the online course material. A score of 22 correct answers out of a possible 25 questions is required to pass and proceed with the remainder of the course.

After successfully completing the Field Day, hunters will receive a hunter education card from the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism.

"It's about education," said Kelly, "we want people to have the confidence to handle a firearm safely." Hunter education "instills the necessary safety aspects from the moment a firearm is picked up to the moment the firearm is stored away."

A hunting education teaches respect for the sport of hunting through preparation and knowledge. It teaches respect and understanding for the work of wildlife managers, respect for the firearm by controlling the muzzle at all times, respect for the law by abiding by bag and possession limits, hunting laws and regulations, respect for game by hunting only what you can use, respect for the landowner by acting as a guest, leaving the area as you found it, respect for yourself by acting in a manner that ensures the future of the sport and sets a good example for others, and respect for the future of hunting by understanding that hunting is a privilege, not a right.

"Load the brain before you load the gun," said Kelly, referencing the mantra of retired Hunter Education Coordinator Wayne Doyle. "A little bit of education goes a long way. The individual behind the firearm is dangerous, not the firearm itself."



BY CHOICE HOTELS

201 E. Holme, Norton, Kansas – Phone 785-874-5151

- COMPLIMENTARY HOT BREAKFAST
- FREE HIGH SPEED INTERNET
- MICROWAVE
- REFRIGERATOR
- FLAT SCREEN TELEVISION
- FITNESS CENTER
- BANQUET AND MEETING ROOMS

BRAND-NEW

www.sleepinn.com

SLEEP

INN & SUITES

Kansas Lottery Tickets Sold Here!



WINE—SPIRITS—CHAMPAGNE—BEER

Check Our Monthly Specials

"COLDEST BEER IN TOWN"

J & R LIQUOR

112 N. First Avenue - 785-877-2585

DOWNTOWN NORTON

Open: Mon.-Thurs., 9 a.m.-10:30 p.m.; Fri. and Sat.: 9 a.m.-11 p.m.