

Utah 4-H Shooting Sports Program Teaches Safety, Leadership, and Responsibility

Dennis Hinkamp

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PHOTO

ATTACHED, courtesy of USU Extension 4-H
Left to right: Jay Young, Danilynn Springer, Wyatt Mann, and Kooper Kelso.

Utah State University Extension's 4-H shooting sports program promotes safety, responsibility, and leadership for Utah's youth. First and foremost, it is a positive youth development program that uses firearms and archery as tools to teach life skills. While participants learn marksmanship, the program's larger mission is to help young people develop self-discipline, confidence, sportsmanship, and sound decision-making skills that extend far beyond the range.

"Safety serves as the foundation for every activity," said Brandi Reber, 4-H shooting sports coordinator. "Before youth ever participate in live-fire exercises, they spend significant time learning proper firearm or archery handling, range commands, equipment storage, and responsible decision-making. Safe behavior is reinforced during every practice, and participants who cannot demonstrate safe conduct are not allowed to continue shooting."

The program is often confused with Utah's Hunter Education course, but Reber said the two serve different purposes. Hunter Education prepares individuals to become safe, ethical hunters and fulfills state licensing requirements. Utah 4-H shooting sports is an ongoing educational experience centered on positive youth development. Participants engage in regular practices, competitions, leadership opportunities, community service, and year-round mentoring from certified instructors.

"Many participants have no intention of hunting and instead enjoy target shooting, archery, or other disciplines

as recreational or competitive activities," she said. "Every Utah 4-H shooting sports instructor is a trained and certified volunteer who completes state-approved instruction in youth development, risk management, and their specific shooting discipline. Although firearms often receive the most public attention, the program also includes archery and other shooting disciplines. Regardless of the discipline, youth learn the same core values: safety, responsibility, respect, self-control, and ethical behavior."

Nearly 600 youth and adults registered for a Utah 4-H shooting sports project during the past year. Eighty-eight youth competed in the two-day 4-H state contest in May, with 13 senior division competitors advancing to represent Utah at the National 4-H Shooting Sports Contest in Grand Island, Nebraska.

The program follows strict safety standards established through USU Extension and the National 4-H Shooting Sports Program and prepares young men and women for much more than success in competition. The program helps build the next generation of responsible citizens, leaders, and lifelong learners.

For more information, visit the [4-H shooting sports website](#).

Writers and Contacts

Dennis Hinkamp
Dennis.Hinkamp@usu.edu

Brandi Reber
Brandi.Reber@usu.edu

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