

Welcome by Dr. David Knotts, IHEA Executive Vice President



CONGRATULATIONS ON BECOMING A STUDENT IN ONE OF THE FINEST SAFETY AND CONSERVATION PROGRAMS IN THE WORLD.

You are now part of an elite fraternity. You are a hunter that has been trained in the safe handling of firearms, outdoors ethics, and the conduct of a responsible sportsman. Your instructor may have been a game warden, a salesman, a truck driver or engineer. Regardless, they each had something in common—their dedication to the tradition of hunting and maintenance of the future of the sport. They want to help you be safe, responsible, and knowledgeable as you participate in your hunting heritage.

Hunter education includes a wide array of topics such as wildlife conservation, game care, survival, first aid, water safety, and such special concerns as the use of all-terrain vehicles and working with hunting dogs. Other topics include introductions to muzzleloading, bowhunting, and turkey hunting. However, safety remains the primary focus of the program.

The course you are completing is only as good as your commitment to apply the skills and techniques you learn. Hunting is one of the oldest traditions we are able to participate in today. Whether you hunt to supplement your diet or to simply enjoy a sport that brings you close to the great out-

doors and share the companionship of fellow hunters, no experience is worth an accident. Always hunt safely.

I urge you to help preserve our hunting heritage by volunteering to become a hunter education instructor. Volunteers are the backbone of the state and provincial hunter education programs and the sport is always "looking for a few good men and women" to serve as instructors. If you love to hunt, then there is no greater experience than sharing your love for the sport and no greater satisfaction than teaching another. Contact your state or provincial wildlife agency for details on becoming a volunteer instructor. Your instructor can provide you with a name and phone number to start you in the right direction.

You can also support hunter education by joining the International Hunter Education Association. We provide discounts on teaching aids and help to keep you informed about hunter education issues and training opportunities. Contact IHEA, P.O. Box 480, Wellington, CO 80549 or visit www.ihea.com for more details. We look forward to hearing from you.

A Message from Ray Eye, Speaker, Instructor, and Host of Cabela's "Sportsman's Quest" on ESPN2



I WANT TO WELCOME THE GRADUATES OF HUNTER-EDUCATION COURSES NATIONWIDE TO THE 11TH ANNUAL HUNTER'S HANDBOOK.

The hunter-ed course you recently completed, along with the information in this Handbook, give you valuable insights about how to hunt ethically, safely, effectively, and responsibly. These are crucial lessons for every hunter to learn, because when we take the field, we also take on a lot of responsibility.

I learned this early, because I grew up in a hunting family, and hunting was always a family affair and is still the same today. For me, hunter safety was always a part of hunting, along with a respect for firearms, wildlife and the land. These were instilled in me from the time I could walk.

My grandfather first taught me about wildlife and the great outdoors in the Ozark Mountains of Missouri—near the same place I live today with my wife and three children. When I grew up, I spent 25 years as a professional hunting guide, learning the tactics, ethics, and safety skills every hunter should learn.

The lessons I learned stuck with me, because I was one of the few seminar speakers in the 1970s and 1980s who included hunter safety in my programs. In fact, my seminars were always advertised as "Turkey Hunting and Safety seminars."

I enjoy meeting people while hunting, traveling, and during personal appearances, and I continue to appreciate the job hunter education does in getting first-time hunters ready for the field. Because that's not always the case—every once in a while, there's someone like Francis.

Francis booked a spring turkey hunt and was very enthusiastic. When he pulled a shiny Remington 1100 out of a case, you could tell by the looks, smell and tags on the gun, it was fresh out of the box and unfired. He even had to ask me how to load the gun.

That wasn't the only problem which would plague Francis throughout the day. He traversed the Ozark hills with the finesse of a man dragging a bell and chain—the noisiest man alive.

At one spot I owl-hooted, and a bird answered close enough I could

hear the rattle in his gobble. He was maybe 60 yards away. I whispered to Francis to sneak up to an old oak, handed him a "bullet," and told him to shoot as soon as he had a legal turkey and a clear, safe shot.

Francis sneaked up to the oak without so much as rustling a leaf. He carefully placed the shell in the gun's chamber. With a single finger he pushed the little silver button that slammed the action home, and a crash echoed down the hollow and through the hills.

Looking over the top of his pop-bottle-thick glasses, Francis turned to me and whispered, "Okay, Ray, call him up."

Francis's misadventures may seem funny, and I suppose they are, but they also illustrate how ill prepared some people—even adults—are when they first go hunting. Your hunter education course has helped with that, I'm sure.

On your first hunt, I hope you have Francis's enthusiasm. With your hunter education training under your belt, I know you'll be better prepared.

—Ray Eye's Background— It could be said that Ray Eye's outdoors career was launched when he began hunting as a youngster. But in terms of his work in the field, in 1967 he produced and appeared in public service announcements (PSAs) on turkey hunting safety for television and radio. The spots ran the first year in Missouri, but other states asked for them, and they eventually ran nationwide.

He was certified as a hunter safety instructor in Missouri, and in the early 1980s, he was certified to test instructors, and also to teach safety instructors. In his "Eye on the Wild Turkey" video series, safety PSAs were on the beginning of videos—at the time, perhaps the only outdoor videos with safety PSAs.

Today, he teaches 40 to 50 seminars a year nationwide at major sport and boat shows, hunting shows, and before conservation groups. He also hosts Cabela's "Sportsman's Quest" hunting show on ESPN2 and "Eye on the Outdoors," an award-winning national radio show on FANSPORTS, KFNS in St. Louis, Missouri. He also is a headline speaker and emcee on the National Rifle Association's "Great American Hunters Tour," a project he's been involved with since 1992.