

VIRGINIA HUNTER EDUCATION CHALLENGE

RULES

May 1-3, 2026

Sponsored by



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VIRGINIA HUNTER
EDUCATION ASSOCIATION



SAFETY RULES

1. Firearms must remain unloaded and cased until presented to the event staff. No uncased firearms are allowed anywhere in the camp, except on the ranges.
2. Actions of uncased firearms must always be open, except when on the firing line ready to fire.
3. Firearms are to be unloaded, except when on the firing line, ready to fire.
4. The safety device of a firearm will remain on at all times, except when ready to fire.
5. All firearms and drawn bows will be pointed in a safe direction at all times.
6. Know and obey all range commands.
7. Only one shell or cartridge may be placed in a firearm at a time, unless otherwise directed by the event staff.
8. Competitors, coaches, and spectators shall wear adequate ear protection and wrap around style safety glasses or safety glasses with side panels for eye protection while on or near the firing line during the rifle and shotgun events. Safety glasses must have a rating of Z87.1 or higher as rated by the American National Safety Institute (ANSI).
9. If not using a firearm or bow it should be cased and/or placed in a rack or safe area. Arrows will not be nocked until on the firing line.
10. No one is allowed to ride in the back of pick-up trucks.

GENERAL RULES & GUIDELINES

1. Coaches are responsible for the safety and behavior of their team members at all times while on the 4-H Center grounds.
2. In the event of an accident or emergency, notify event staff. Call 911 if urgent. If after 10:00 PM, contact the Department designee located in the nurse's quarters, adjacent to cabin #1.
3. Swimming in the lake or swimming pool is prohibited. Any unauthorized swimming or trespass in the pool area WILL result in disqualification and dismissal from the property.
4. Security for all personal equipment is the responsibility of each team coach.
5. Manipulation of any part of a firearm or other equipment to circumvent any rules will result in the immediate disqualification of the competitor.
6. If any team member has a disability or otherwise requires specific accommodations, please notify event officials prior to or at the time of registration so that event officials can make necessary arrangements for appropriate accommodations.
7. No dogs allowed other than service dogs.

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

All forms will be sent electronically to Holiday Lake. Please contact Holiday Lake 4-H Educational Center for fees and refund policies questions. **All forms for competitors under the age of 18 must have a parent or guardian's signature.**

Completed HEC entry forms and payment must be received in the Holiday Lake Office no later than **April 10, 2026**. Upon receipt, you will receive confirmation.

You will receive email confirmation, agenda, and start schedule approximately two weeks prior to the HEC.

REGISTRATION CHECK LIST

1. All forms completed to Holiday Lake.
2. A copy of the competitor's Hunter Education card to Hunter Education Office or at check-in.
3. Hold Harmless/Code Conduct form for each competitor and coach and guest observer to Holiday Lake 4-H Educational Center, signed by parents, if under 18.
4. Holiday Lake 4-H Educational Center will determine all meals and lodging rates.
5. Parent/guest reservations to 4-H center, if applicable.
6. DEADLINE **APRIL 10, 2026**.

In the past, competitors have been denied the opportunity to compete because the event was full, only to have registered teams fail to show up. If there is a problem with your registration, you will be notified, but **we cannot reserve your space until all the requirements are met.**

CONTACT NUMBERS

Region I Coordinator	Bryan Branch	(804) 836-5943
Region II Coordinator	Zach Adams	(434) 221-9511
Region III Coordinator	Jeff Pease	(276) 706-0821
Region IV Coordinator	Jason Miller	(804) 921-0843
State Manager	Jimmy Mootz	(804) 512-0080
4-H Center		(434) 248-5444

ELIGIBILITY

1. All competitors must have successfully completed a basic hunter education course accepted by the Commonwealth of Virginia for the purchase of a hunting license. Team members are not required to take the same hunter education course or take the course from the sponsoring instructor.
2. Each team attending the VAHEC must have at least one sponsoring adult who is a certified Virginia Hunter Education Instructor or 4-H Shooting Education Instructor. The sponsoring instructor will chaperon and coach for the duration of the activities. Additional chaperons will need to pay the full price for lodging and meals, see Holiday Lake 4-H Center for rates.
3. Teams will consist of five members. All individual scores will count toward team totals.
4. It is not mandatory to compete in every event. Competitors will be eligible for individual awards for every event in which they participate. Coaches must notify event officials at check-in if competitors will not compete in all events.
5. Competitors must be no older than 18 years of age on May 3, 2026.
6. Individual participation will be allowed, provided that a certified Virginia Hunter Education Instructor or 4-H Shooting Education Instructor sponsors and accompanies the competitor during the VAHEC. Individual participants may be assigned to a team for event management purposes.
7. Alternates are allowed and will be registered at check in.
8. Once a competitor is registered at the check-in point, an alternate cannot be used as a replacement.
9. All individual competitors who live in the same county as other individual competitors will be grouped together as a team (exceptions will be approved by the Hunter Education Team Lead or designee). The coaches for that team will be comprised of the Hunter Education Instructor or 4-H Shooting Education Instructor coaches who are sponsoring the first two individuals who submit a completed entry packet.
10. All competitors must be currently enrolled in or have graduated from a public, private or home school, grades 1-12.

ENTRIES

Each team **must** be pre-registered by **April 10, 2026**. Entries may be limited to the first 200 competitors submitting completed forms.

CHALLENGE REGULATIONS

1. Safety is the primary concern during all activities and events.
2. Competitors and spectators assume all risk of personal injury or property damage.
3. Competitors violating any safety rule will be counseled. Any subsequent violations may result in disqualification. If the safety violation is severe, the competitor may be immediately disqualified.
4. Competitors are required to provide their own firearms, bows and arrows, compasses, hearing, and eye protection.
5. All firearms and other equipment must be well maintained and in proper working condition to ensure safe and efficient operation.
6. Competitors will have one opportunity to participate in each activity.
7. Competitors are expected to exhibit behavior which is safe and above reproach at all times.
8. Coaches cannot participate as competitors.
9. The use of electronic communication devices is not permitted while competing in any event. The use of FRS frequencies 1-5 are not permitted at any time during Saturday's events.
10. *Deadline for coaches to check-in all teams to the HEC is 7:00 p.m. Friday, May 1, 2026.* Registration begins at 4:00 p.m. that afternoon.
11. No team member or coach is permitted on any event site prior to participation in that event. "Scouting" or any other such activity by any team member or coach will result in the disqualification of the entire team for that event.

CHALLENGES

Challenges concerning the value of shots as scored will be resolved as detailed in the rules of each event. All challenges must be made during the challenge period. The event coordinator will make the final decision.

PROTESTS

A protest committee, consisting of Hunter Education staff members, will handle all disputes except those regarding the value of shots as scored. These officials will decide any questions about equipment, behavior, score, or interpretation of any rule. All decisions made by the protest committee will be final.

CATEGORIES

All members of a team must qualify as juniors in order for the team to compete as a junior team. A competitor who is eligible to compete as a junior may compete

either in the junior or senior category, but not both. Juniors who compete on a senior team will still be considered juniors for individual awards.

- JUNIOR - Maximum age 14
- SENIOR - Ages 15 – 18

MOVEMENT THROUGH THE EVENT

1. Each team will be assigned an event at which they must begin the competition. Teams must move through the events in the following order:
 - *Rifle to Outdoor Skills*
 - *Outdoor Skills to Shotgun*
 - *Shotgun to Archery*
 - *Archery to Rifle*
2. The coach must check in with event staff upon arrival at each event.
3. When all team members have completed the event, the coach must check out to ensure that event staff is aware that the team has finished and that there are no issues to be resolved. At that time, the coach or designee will review the team's scoresheets for accuracy and sign them.
4. Teams are expected to move through events as efficiently as possible. If a break or other delay is anticipated, this must be communicated to the next event coordinator.
5. Failure to complete events during the planned hours of the VAHEC may result in ineligibility for consideration in overall awards or inability to compete in an individual event. Coaches should not allow teams to delay unnecessarily between events.

ALIBIS

Range, trap, or ammunition malfunction will constitute an alibi. No alibis will be allowed for firearm, arrow, or bow malfunction. In the event of a firearm or bow malfunction, competitors may borrow a firearm or bow and continue the relay. No practice or sighting-in will be allowed for borrowed firearms or bows once the events have started.

EVENTS AND SCORING

There will be five events which will count equally in determining the top team and individual awards (Rifle, Shotgun, Archery, Outdoor Skills, and the Hunter Responsibility Exam). Each event will have a maximum score of 300 points. Awards will be presented in senior & junior categories for each event and overall individuals.

Competitors are eligible for individual awards for high scores for each event and overall. Individual overall scores are calculated by adding the scores for all five events.

Team scores for individual events are calculated by adding all individual scores in that event. Overall team scores are calculated by adding the overall scores for each competitor on the team.

Coaches or designee are requested to check and sign their team's scoresheets for accuracy before leaving each event. Coaches may only challenge legibility and calculating issues. No further opportunity to challenge scores will be allowed, except for data entry errors. Coaches will meet with the event scorer prior to the awards presentation to verify scores were entered properly.

No coach will be allowed to view another team's scores.

22 Caliber Rimfire Rifle Event

1. The Light Hunting Rifle Challenge will be conducted with participants shooting at NRA approved action targets varying in distance, with scoring areas determined based upon type of target(s) used. Participants will shoot from three positions.
 - A. Position one (1) – (short range) may have a distance of 30 yards or less. Participants will shoot from a standing position with no props permitted at these distances.
 - B. Position two (2) - (medium range) may have a distance of 50 yards or less. Participants may use any shooting position (excluding prone) with the vertical post prop as the only aid.
 - C. Position three (3) - (long range) may have a distance of 65 yards or less. Participants may use any shooting position and utilize any available props. The rifle may be supported by props or bipod at only one point.
2. Scoring - Each participant will shoot a total of 30 shots. All shots knocking down the NRA approved action target will be scored a "hit." A participant will be allowed 2 minutes per shooting relay. There will be 2 relays per station with 5 shots each, with the complete course to be fired in 15 minutes. The Chief Range Officer will indicate when the time begins and ends. This time period does not include breaks between shooting stations (short, medium and long range.) The Light Hunting Rifle Challenge has a maximum possibility of 300 points.
3. Crossfires will be counted as misses. Only shots on a shooter's own target will count.
4. Targets will be scored at the rifle range.
5. Shooters will not be allowed downrange.
6. Tied scores for individual and team rifle event winners will be broken the following way:
 - 1st tiebreaker – highest score at the long-range target
 - 2nd tiebreaker – highest score at the mid-range target
 - 3rd tiebreaker – highest score at the short-range target
 - 4th tiebreaker – total number of chickens hit

If a tie still exists, at the conclusion of the event the shooters shall return to the range and the tie will be broken by an elimination shoot-off at the metal targets on the long range. Shooters may shoot from any position other than prone. No support will be allowed. Shooters will fire one shot at each of the five targets. Scores will be determined based upon a numeric value given to the target due to degree of difficulty (size). Turkey & prairie dog will be worth 1 point each. Ram & rabbit will be worth 3 points each and the chick will be worth 5 points. In case of another tie, the process will be repeated until there is a winner.

7. Rifles: Only standard type .22 caliber rifles designed primarily for hunting will be permitted. All action types except for fully automatic will be permissible. The rifle weight may not exceed 8 1/2 pounds and must have a minimum trigger pull of 2 pounds (907 grams). Exterior devices intended to alter the trigger pull, such as rubber bands, will not be permitted. Rifles may be equipped with a hunting sling not to exceed 1 1/2 inches (3.81 cm) in width. Sights will be open or peep or hunting scopes nine power or less. Variable scopes may be used if they are fixed in a fashion that would prevent their adjustment above 9X during the event. Shooters may not change rifles after firing begins, except in the event of a rifle malfunction. Bipods are permissible at the long- range stage (not provided by VDWR). Bipods must be attached to rifle at time of weigh in and remain attached during entire event. Props will be available at each station. The maximum weight of the rifle with the bipod may not exceed 8 1/2 pounds. *No alterations will be permitted after a rifle has been submitted for check-in. Be sure the rifle meets all requirements before submission.*

8. Prohibited equipment:
 - A. Clothing with added padding or stiffness designed to assist competitive shooters to remain steady
 - B. Shooting mats (except mats provided)
 - C. Adjustable competition sling swivel
 - D. Hook butt plate
 - E. Palm rests or forearm of stocks exceeding 2 1/4 inches (5.72 cm) deep as measured from the center line of the bore
 - F. Scopes or optics greater than nine power (see rifles above)
 - G. Spotting scopes
 - H. Range finders
 - I. Binoculars

9. Certain attachments, modifications or types of rifles may be approved for individuals with physical limitations or challenges. This approval must come from the Hunter Education Office and the event director fourteen (14) days prior to the event. Before approval, field demonstrations may be required.

10. Shooters will be allowed to use their own ammunition and Federal Game-Shok .710 will also be provided if the shooter wished to use DWR's ammunition.
11. Practicing on the rifle range prior to the event is prohibited.
12. Any communication between shooters and coaches or spectators while shooters are on the firing line will be grounds for disqualification of the shooter.
13. Hearing and eye protection will be required for all persons in the spectator area.
14. Only the competitor may challenge the call of an individual shot. Challenges must be made immediately and will be determined by the scorer and range officer. Scores are considered final when competitor signs their scorecard.

Shotgun (Sporting Clays)

1. The shotgun event will consist of 25 targets, worth 12 points each, shot from various hunting simulated situations. The shooting stations will make use of available cover to depict authentic hunting situations and shooting obstacles.
2. VDWR officials will furnish 12 and 20 gauge ammunition in "low brass" target loads (the specific manufacturer and type of loads will be at the discretion of VDWR). Competitors choosing a gauge other than that detailed above are required to furnish their own factory loaded shells. Hand loads are not permitted.
3. Participants can use their own ammunition, if desired. Only factory-loaded target shells with shot size between 7 ½ and 9 (inclusive) will be permitted. It will be the responsibility of the participant/coach to provide this ammunition to the event officials prior to the activity.
4. Safety and courtesy are first in gun handling; therefore, all guns will be carried unloaded and with actions open. Clear chamber indicators, if required, will be provided at the event.
5. Participants may use only one shotgun throughout the activity except in the case of malfunction. Event officials must be advised if a malfunctioning firearm requires replacement.
6. Cheek stocks or butt plates may be adjusted prior to event orientation. No further adjustments will be allowed once competition has begun.
7. Shotguns may not be larger than 12 gauge. All action types except fully automatic will be permissible. There are no restrictions on shotgun grade, design or intended use beyond the prohibitions below. Competitors may not change firearms after beginning the course except in the event of a malfunction.
Prohibited equipment:
 - A. Release triggers
 - B. Shot size larger than 7 1/2
 - C. Shot size smaller than 9
 - D. Shotguns equipped with lenses, optic or illuminated sighting fixtures
 - E. Shotguns 10 gauge or larger
 - F. Shotguns without a safety or with a disabled safety
 - G. Hand-loaded ammunition

8. When ready for a target the competitor will call "PULL!" A delay of up to five seconds may occur before the target is released. ALL competitors will be required to use the standard, two hand, "low-ready" carry, and may not mount the firearm until they see the clay target flying. **As a safety precaution, Junior shooters may pre-mount the shotgun prior to calling for the shot.*
9. For a target to be scored as a hit, competitors must hit the target, and a visible piece must break off. The scorer will call out "HIT" or "DEAD" for a hit clay. Only shots fired at whole targets will be scored. The point value of a legal hit is twelve.
 - A. Shooters must fire at all whole targets released or the targets will be scored as "lost"; only ammunition or trap malfunction will enable a new target. Continued shotgun malfunction will require the use of another shotgun as directed by the range officer.
 1. Should the participant break both targets with either the first or second shot, they will both be scored as "dead" targets.
 2. In the event of a "no bird" call on the second target of a report pair, the first bird is established as "dead" or "lost", and the shooter will repeat the pair to establish the result of the second target. When repeating the pair, the shooter must make a legitimate attempt at breaking the first target.
 3. In the event of a "no bird" call on true pair or following pair, nothing is established. The shooter will repeat the pair.
 4. In the event of a "shooter malfunction" on the first target of a report pair, the first target is established as "lost." The shooter will repeat the pair to establish the result of the second target. When repeating the pair, the shooter must make a legitimate attempt at breaking the first target.
 - B. The following malfunctions will not be allowed, and targets will be scored "lost":
 1. Participant error
 2. Failure to load gun
 3. Failure of gun to fire (other than defective ammunition)
 4. Failure of gun to reload
 5. Failure to select safety to off
10. Only the competitor may challenge the call of an individual shot. Challenges must be made immediately (before exiting the shooting station) and will be determined by the trap operator, scorer and/or range officer.
11. Tie scores for individual shotgun event winners will be broken based on target difficulty. The event director will determine the order of difficulty.

3D Archery Event

1. The Archery Event will consist of one (1) round of ten (10) individual 3-D targets; competitors will shoot at various distances ranging from 5-40 yards.
2. Targets and Scoring:
 - A. The targets will be 3-D with superimposed scoring areas that correspond to the vital areas of the animal.
 - B. One arrow, per shooter, per target, will be shot from each target stake. Shooters will maintain contact with the stake with either foot and assume a shooting position that is even with, or behind each stake from a standing, kneeling, or sitting position.
 - C. Targets will have four scoring areas for a total of 300 points. Shooters will have 45 seconds to shoot.
 - D. All arrows must remain in the target, untouched until all arrows are scored. No changes may be made to the score after the arrow is removed.
 - E. Challenges must be made by the competitor on the range before removing the arrow from the target. Arrows may not be removed until a scoring judgment has been made. No changes may be made to the score after removal of any arrow.
 - F. Any arrow embedded ("Robin Hood") in the nock of another arrow will be scored the same as the arrow it is embedded in.
3. Tied scores for individual and team archery shooting events will be broken based on target difficulty. The event coordinator will determine the order of difficulty in advance.
4. Compound, recurve, or long bows will be permitted. Bows may be equipped with hunting type sights. Shooters may use only one bow for this event, except in the event of malfunction.
5. Only target or field point arrows will be allowed. All arrows must be carried in a quiver, not in hand or pocket.
6. Each shooter must have a minimum of 6 arrows.
7. No weight requirements on field points.

8. Prohibited equipment:

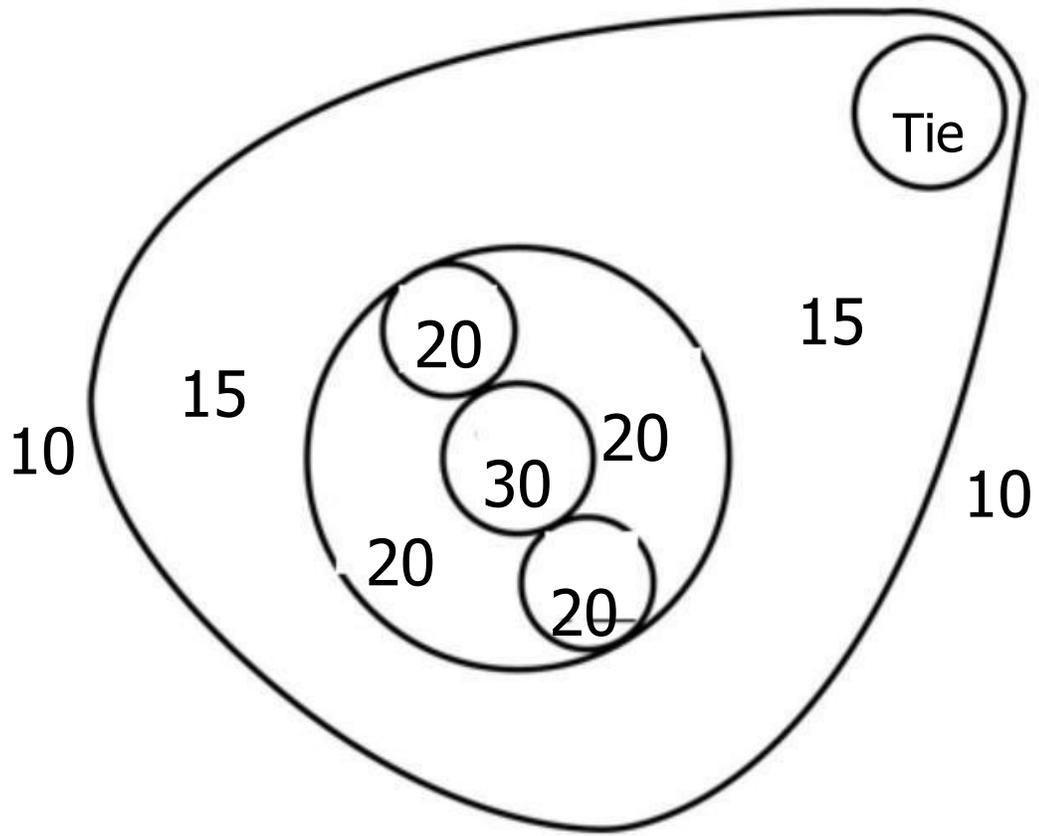
- A. Extended sight bars that measure more than six inches from the back of the riser of the bow to the front of the sight
- B. More than one stabilizer
- C. Stabilizer over 12 inches long
- D. Range finders. This includes sight/rangefinders such as "Stadiametric Ranging System".
- E. Binoculars equipped with a lanyard or any other equipment or clothing that could become entangled with the bow string shall not be worn while shooting.
- F. Crossbows.
- G. Sights that have a lens with or without magnification.
- H. Drawing of a bow in any direction other than parallel to the ground.

9. Shooters are permitted to use binoculars for target identification and shot placement.

10. DWR, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) will make reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities.

A. Certain attachments, modification or types of bows or crossbows may be approved for individuals with physical limitations. This approval must come from the Hunter Education Office and the event director fourteen days before the event. A physician's affidavit attesting to the participant's physical limitations may be required for consideration by the event director.

B. In the event of a crossbow use request, red dot scopes or scopes with magnification not to exceed 4X must be approved by the event director. Before approval, actual field demonstrations may be required.



Outdoor Skills Trail Event

The Outdoor Skills Trail Event will consist of a field compass course and short hunter education trail:

Field Compass Course

On the compass course, each competitor must use a compass and distance estimation to locate predetermined points in the field. From a fixed point, competitors will be directed to move a given number of yards on the given compass bearing. They will then stop and indicate they are ready to be scored. Counting the number of paces between points is permitted. The distance between points and the compass bearings will vary.

The competitor will be accompanied by an event official who will score the competitor according to the accuracy of both the compass bearing and the distance estimated to each point.

Hunter Education Trail

The trail portion will consist of a short hunter safety trail. As the competitor arrives at each station, he/she will be presented with a scenario that may or may not include a safety, legal, or ethical dilemma based on Virginia law and the Virginia Hunter Education Course. Competitors will be scored on how they respond to each situation, which may include being asked to judge distance in yards to the target.

COACHES: event staff have noticed that competitors always look for a “trick” and observe that this has taken the focus off paying attention to what is happening in the scenario, which are set up to simulate what they may encounter while hunting. An example is whether or not a head shot is available on a turkey and if that is an ethical shot rather than focusing on how the scenario is set up to “trick” the competitor. Please emphasize listening to the scenario as presented and the safety, legal, or ethical implications.

The tie breakers will be determined in advance based on difficulty of the compass course and skills trail.

Hunter Responsibility Examination

The Hunter Responsibility Examination will be completed prior to arrival at the HEC. This will facilitate timely scoring and improve accuracy. There will be an electronic format this year. Rules for the off-site test will be the same as in the past.

Coaches:

- Coaches must proctor the tests. It is recommended that all participants gather and take it at the same time. The link will be sent to the coaches in advance of the test timeframe (two weeks before HEC event) each participant will need to log in on their own device and take the test and wildlife identification sections. Once electronically submitted, the test will be electronically scored and then added to the competitor's overall score.
- Please do not make copies of the test.
- Student will have 45 minutes to complete the test. The wildlife ID is timed and cannot be paused once the wildlife identification test starts.
- The Hunter Responsibility Examination will include 50 questions and the identification of 50 North American game animals. Questions will be multiple choice and true/false. Questions and game ID are primarily taken from The Hunters Guide (NRA publications), Today's Hunter (DWR's Hunter Education Student Manual and available online from Kalkomey), Today's Wildlife Field Identification Guide (<https://bookstore.kalkomey.com/>), Hunting & Trapping in Virginia (VA Hunting regs), and Migratory Game Bird Hunting in Virginia (VA migratory regs).
- Competitors must answer questions individually with no assistance from other competitors, written material, coaches, or instructors.
- Tie scores will be broken based on the difficulty of the questions answered correctly. These will be determined in advance. If a tie still exists, it will be broken with additional hunter responsibility questions.

Competitors:

Please observe the following rules:

- You have 45 minutes to complete the test.
- Sit at a clean desk or table, no books, tablets, cell phone, or other electronic devices may be used to assist in answering the questions; use your preferred device only to view and answer the test and wildlife ID questions.
- No leaving the room once the test has started.
- No talking or communicating with others by any means.
- Complete this test on your own with no help from others, no cheating.
- Read the questions thoroughly and if you don't know...guess.
- Mark only one response per question.

Coaches of competitors are strongly encouraged to alert staff if any competitor has learning disabilities, so that reasonable accommodation can be made if necessary.

AWARDS

TEAM AWARDS

First place junior team in each event
Second place junior team in each event
Third place junior team in each event

First place senior team in each event
Second place senior team in each event
Third place senior team in each event

Junior Team Champions
Second place junior team
Third place junior team

Senior Team Champions
Second place senior team Third
place senior team

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

First place junior in all included individual events combined
Second place junior in all included individual events combined
Third place junior in all included individual events combined

First place senior in all included individual events combined
Second place senior in all included individual events combined
Third place senior in all included individual events combined

First place junior in each event
Second place junior in each event
Third place junior in each event
First place senior in each event
Second place senior in each event Third
place senior in each event

Additional awards may be given if circumstances allow.

TIES

Ties for aggregate score will be broken. The first tiebreaker will be whether or not the competitor/team has completed all events. If there is still a tie, the competitor/team with the highest score on the hunter responsibility exam will be declared the winner. If a tie remains, the competitor team with the highest combined score in the three shooting events will be declared the winner. After that, the high score on the Outdoor Skills Trail will decide the winner. The next tiebreaker will be a combined score on the shotgun event, then the rifle event, and then the score on the archery competition. This procedure will be applied to individual and team competitors.

EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS

The following telephone numbers are provided should you need to be contacted while at the Challenge.

Holiday Lake 4-H Educational Center	(434) 248-5444
EMERGENCY ONLY:	
Appomattox Sheriff's Office	911
Virginia State Police Third Division HQ	911
State Police, Appomattox	911
DWR, Richmond Dispatch	(804) 367-5415
Appomattox Rescue Squad	911