



ALBERTA HUNTER EDUCATION INSTRUCTORS' ASSOCIATION

#88, 4003 – 98 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T6E 6M8
Tel: (780) 466-6682 • Fax: (780) 431-2871
1-866-28-AHEIA
edmontoninfo@aheia.com
www.aheia.com



AHEIA's "Learn to Hunt" Program Overview

The Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association is pleased to introduce a 16-class "Learn to Hunt" program for new and novice hunters. Held over 10 months, this program arms new and novice hunters with everything needed to be a confident, knowledgeable, and successful hunter. While making friendships with other first-time hunters, participants will experience a wide variety of classes both in class and in the field. As a culmination of the program, AHEIA will offer mentored hunting experiences for participants during the month of November. As mentored hunt spaces are limited, priority for the one-on-one mentored hunt with available instructors will be given to those who attend most classes. A \$50 refundable deposit will reserve a seat for all 16 classes. Additional fees for range days or other specialized off-site instruction may be added. Spaces are limited so register early.

SESSION TOPICS AND TIMELINES

Classroom sessions will be offered monthly (more or less) and will be delivered in two- to two-and-a-half-hour classroom presentations, or during full- or part-day field exercises. Below are the topics to be covered and the dates of each individual session.

1. AHEIA's Learn to Hunt program, an Introduction and Overview – February 10 (date confirmed)
 - This will be an introduction for some attendees and a wrap-up for others. We will go over the 2024 mentored hunt season and hear from those who were able to participate and will obtain goals and objectives from those who have not yet had the opportunity.
 - A thorough overview of AHEIA programming will be provided.
- Wildlife Identification (and Tracks) – February 10 (date subject to change)
 - Participants will be given information on how to identify game species in Alberta. Emphasis will be placed on differentiating white tailed deer and mule deer. Special attention will be paid to antlerless animals, given that AHEIA mentored mule deer hunts will be for antlerless animals only.
 - Pictures and videos from past and current Hunter Education programs will be used along with sourced photos from online and personal collections.
 - Participants will be encouraged to identify mounts in the classroom and will be given a test at the end of the class.
2. Finding Potential Hunting Areas – March 3 (date subject to change)
 - Participants will look at maps and satellite photos from the areas that were hunted in previous years. This will give them an opportunity to see what suitable habitat looks like from above and learn how white-tailed deer move through their habitat in search of food, water, and cover.
 - Participants will be given new maps and photos to look over and decide if/where a good location for deer might be, and how they might hunt them.
 - The use of technology such as Google Earth, Google Maps, iHunter, and others will be discussed.
 - Participants will be encouraged to follow through on their work by attending the land in person and report back.

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3. Access to public and private land – Mar 17 (date subject to change)
 - Best practices in accessing land will be explored with the participants in the classroom using sources such as county landowner maps, iHunter and other apps and online sources. Public access lands will be identified through the use of the “Discovery Guide” published by the ACA, and publications both online and in print from such sources as Ducks Unlimited, the Alberta Wildlife Federation, Delta Waterfowl and others.
 - Identifying and accessing public Crown land will be an important part of this session.

4. Clothing and Equipment – April 7 (date subject to change)
 - Topics to be covered will relate to proper dress during various hunting seasons, and while hunting a variety of game species. For example, different clothing is required while hunting waterfowl in a field vs in a marsh; in a blind vs walking trails for whitetail deer, etc.
 - As well, equipment necessary for field-dressing big game will be discussed along with the equipment required to make the hunt more successful. Topics will include proper firearms for the species being hunted, shooting accessories such as shooting sticks, range finders, binoculars, field-dressing equipment, etc.

5. Firearms Handling and Practical Use – April 21 (date subject to change)
 - As a lead-in to the upcoming Range Day, LTH participants will be invited to handle several types of deactivated firearms to be comfortable and knowledgeable handling firearms the following weekend at the Range Day.
 - Discussion will take place regarding selecting the appropriate firearm and ammunition for the species being hunted.

6. Learn to Shoot (Range Day) – April 26 (alongside Shotgun Coaching Workshop) (date subject to change)
 - New and novice shooters will be introduced to proper shooting techniques using small bore rifles (.22 and .223) and shotguns. This session will focus on helping new shooters become comfortable shooting smaller single-projectile arms by paying attention to proper support of the firearm, breathing techniques, trigger finger placement, trigger pull, target acquisition, and other important aspects of shooting.
 - An introduction to shotgun will be delivered to participants who have expressed a desire to hunt waterfowl. The focus will be on proper stance, mounting the shotgun, dominant eye alignment, target acquisition, and follow-through. This will be done by the Shotgun Coach Workshop participants, under supervision of AHEIA staff.
 - The goal of this session will be to have the new shooters become somewhat proficient in the basics of shooting one or the other or both types of firearms and begin to contemplate what kind of firearm(s) will best suit their needs.
 - Archery will be offered for those interested.

7. What to do after the Hunt – May 12 (date subject to change)
 - Discussions will include field dressing and skinning both for taxidermy and non-taxidermy purposes, tasteful photography of the hunt, transporting the carcass, and deciding whether to take it to a commercial facility or process it further themselves, among other topics. A guest speaker from a local meat processing facility may be invited to come in and let the new hunters know how best to prepare the carcasses for drop-off, and what to expect at the butcher shop.
 - We will also look at meal prep and making best use of wild game. Participants will be encouraged to reach out to more experienced hunters to find out which recipes and/or cuts of meat suit their taste best.

8. Gopher Shoot – May 24 (date subject to change)
 - AHEIA's Learn to Hunt program has acquired access to pastureland for the purpose of hunting gophers (Richardson's Ground Squirrels) during the spring. Locations will be confirmed prior to the hunts taking place. Small arms (.22 caliber rifles) will be used.
 - Anyone wanting to attend the gopher shoot must have attended a previous LTH range day and can only attend with the approval of the Learn to Hunt program Coordinator.
 - **Prerequisites:**
 - i. Learn to Shoot (Range Day)
 - ii. Non-Restricted Firearm Safety Course

9. Hunting Draw Workshop/Overview of Hunting Regulations – June 9 (date subject to change)
 - Participants will be guided through the draw system and will be offered assistance in putting in their draws either that night or when they are ready. This will take place early in June, or whenever the draw booklets are out.
 - Part 2 of this session will cover basic hunting regulations.

10. Waterfowl and Upland Game Bird Hunting – August 11 (date subject to change)
 - Participants will learn what waterfowl and upland game bird hunting involves and how to get into bird hunting. Discussion about potential mentored hunt possibilities will take place as will a bird identification session.

11. Shotgun Proficiency for Waterfowl Hunters (Range Day) – August 23 (with OFS) (date subject to change)
 - This range day will focus exclusively on teaching new or novice shotgun shooters how to be effective with a shotgun and learning the differences between rifle shooting (stationary target) and shotgun shooting (moving target).
 - Instructors will be AHEIA certified shotgun coaches and overseen by an AHEIA certified Range Safety Officer to ensure safety and consistency in instruction.
 - This will be a full day which will include a drive to and from a range, lunch, and shooting instruction. Participants are encouraged to bring and use their own firearms and ammunition but will be trained first on AHEIA firearms with AHEIA supplied ammunition.
 - Although not legally required, a valid non-restricted PAL will be required so the participants are not going into the day with little or no experience handling firearms.
 - Archery will be offered for those interested.
 - **Prerequisites:**
 - i. Learn to Shoot (Range Day)
 - ii. Non-Restricted Firearms Safety Course

12. Archery – Sept 8 (date subject to change)
 - Those new hunters who wish to learn about archery hunting will have the opportunity to discover the opportunities and challenges offered by hunting with this primitive weapon.
 - This will be an in-class session given by an experienced archery hunter, however, developing proficiency in shooting a bow will be the responsibility of the archer themselves.

13. Mentor Seminar – Sept 22 (date subject to change)
- Experienced hunters will be offered an opportunity to mentor new hunters in 2025.
 - Anyone who is interested/available/capable of taking out a new hunter will be offered training in AHEIA's philosophy and techniques for mentoring new hunters. The key concept is that this must be looked at as an opportunity to teach new hunters how to hunt, and that success must not be defined solely by harvesting an animal or bird.
 - This will not be offered to participants in the Learn to Hunt program, but they will be invited to sit-in as observers if they wish.
14. Rifle Proficiency and Archery for Big Game Hunters – Sept 27 (with PHD) (date subject to change)
- Similar to the shotgun proficiency workshop, this will be an all-day range day devoted to developing hunt-level proficiency in the participants. Discussion will be had about the difference between shooting at a stationary paper or metal target vs shooting at a living, breathing animal.
 - Instructors will be AHEIA certified Range Safety Officers.
 - Participants will be trained first on AHEIA owned .223 firearms and moved up to large bore rifles either supplied by AHEIA or brought by the participant.
 - Although not legally required, a valid non-restricted PAL will be required so the participants are not going into the day with little or no experience handling firearms.
 - **Prerequisites:**
 - i. Learn to Shoot (Range Day)
 - ii. Non-Restricted Firearms Safety Course
15. Deer Hunting Tactics – Oct 13 (date subject to change)
- Participants will learn about a variety of deer hunting tactics including the use of blinds or tree stands, spot and stalk, and other useful methods of putting themselves in the best position to harvest an animal. Differences between white tailed and mule deer habits and habitats will be covered.
 - Discussion will center around looking for signs (tracks, scrapes, scat) and locations that indicate deer activity, and how to interpret these signs.
 - Time will be spent ensuring that participants understand deer anatomy and how to ensure proper and effective shot placement, and making a safe, ethical shot.
 - **Prerequisites:**
 - i. Wildlife ID
16. Rifle Sight-In Day – Oct 18 (date subject to change)
- In preparation for Big Game hunts, participants will be required to attend this sight-in day with the firearm they will be using for the hunt.
 - Those who will be using AHEIA firearms will be required to prove proficiency with those rifles and explain in detail how they would sight them in if needed.
 - Those using personal firearms and ammunition will need to show accuracy with their firearms and explain any changes needed before making adjustments under the supervision of an AHEIA coach.