

# Cowboy Mounted Shooting

## Clinic Agenda

### Introductions

**Instructors**  
**Setup Team**

### **Introduction to SASS Cowboy Mounted Shooting**

We will open this portion of the clinic with a brief history of the Cowboy Mounted Shooting. We explain how we got started, the importance of period clothing, explaining that in the beginning we do not expect our new riders to conform to this. We also give tips on how to put together a period costume without spending a lot of money.

- **Firearms**

1. Safety

- Proper way of indexing. Demonstration of safe gun handling and control of muzzle direction are the most important things we will impart all day!

2. Gun Types

- Action vs. Non-action
- Various manufacturers
- Grip styles

Our club members have always loaned out their guns and gun leather for these events so each rider has a choice of different guns to use. This gives them a chance to find a gun that fits their hand and we encourage them to try a number of different styles of guns.

### 3. Holster configurations

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### 4. Period Tack

- Explanation of period tack. Proper fitting saddle, stirrup length, headstall, bit, and reins.

- **Shooting from Ground**

- This will allow Riders to get comfortable with the firearm before mounting their horse.

- **Horse Desensitizing**

1. Circling with Gun fire from center of arena

Purpose is to get horse and rider de-sensitized to the noise. We usually start by putting you and your horse through a simple exercise, like a moving around the arena in a circle. If the horse has never been around gunfire, we start by having an assistant fire off a few rounds when the horse is at the farthest point away from him. We continue to have you slowly move closer and closer to the center, until the gun can be fired while Riders are circling. We will have you move your horse in both directions so that “both sides” of the horse learn that the gunfire won’t hurt them.

2. Circling arena with Riders dry firing weapons

Purpose is to have you ride and shoot at the same time without the anticipation of live fire. This is an incremental step for your horse before live fire.

- **Rider and Horse Shooting**

1. Circling arena with Riders firing live blanks

If the horse is responding satisfactorily, the gun can now be handed to the rider to fire from the back of the horse while continuing to move in the circle pattern. The rider then fires the gun behind him to allow the least amount of concussion to the horse. We'll continue in this fashion until you are firing off two or three rounds in a row with little or no bolting, spooking, etc. Riders can now focused on riding and shooting at the same time without the concern of riding and shooting a stage.

2. Riders run a stage without shooting

Purpose is for you to negotiate a stage without the concern of a firearm. As the horse gains confidence in "running patterns" or turning the barrel/poles, the rider can increase the speed of travel. This is where the instructor gives pointers on how to set your horse up to turn a barrel or negotiate a gate; all skills you will use in Mounted Shooting.

3. Riders run a stage dry firing weapons

Purpose is to have them ride and shoot at the same time without live fire while running a stage. We want the new riders to develop confidence. This confidence translates into a comfort level, which is passed on to the horse through the rider.

4. Riders run a stage with live fire

At this juncture, we bring out a couple of poles with balloons and try shooting the balloons as you ride past them. We ask all new riders to engage balloons after the horse has passed them. This serves two purposes, motivating the horse to move forward and eliminating the blowing up of the balloon in front of the horse.

In this fashion, we continue to have you fire from the hip (don't get any closer to his head to avoid "ringing his bell" and potentially turning a good shooting horse) while still allowing the horse to experience the balloon breaking at the moment the gun goes "bang". The balloon blowing up is always a surprise to the new horse in the beginning! We have the new clinicians set balloons on horseback during the clinic. This helps condition the horse to the balloons.

We would like to take this opportunity to advise the use of earplugs for your horse. These are highly advisable for the new shooting mount. In most cases, the earplugs will help the horse adjust to the sound and will allow you to advance your training schedule much faster than without them.

### **Intermediate's Session** - Advanced Shooters and Horses

- **Riding and Shooting position**
  - Shooters will review the optimal position for shooting accuracy. Riders will learn how the correct position can facilitate a smooth ride and faster results. As you and your horse gain confidence in "running patterns" and turning the barrel/poles, you can then increase the speed of travel.
  - Off-hand vs. Strong side shooting
- **Optimal Gun Changing**
  - Demonstrate when the correct time for holstering during a stage is.  
Practice your rate of speed around the obstacles while simultaneously practicing the drawing and holstering of the guns. This will help you acquire your timing in regards to the speed of the horse, as well as fine-tuning the use of the single action guns with the most efficient use of the holsters to suit your specific needs and style.

- Practice re-holstering without visual aid.
  - Purpose is to focus on direction after shooting your first 5 balloons vs. looking to re-holster and correcting direction.
- Determining the correct holster configuration for your style.
- **Negotiating a stage**
  - Review different stages with Shooters determining best track to ride for optimal time.
 

The speed is not the issue here, control is. We will have you traveling where **YOU** want and not where the horse just happens to be heading. The difference is very subtle. The operative point here is: Be sure you are choosing and not the horse.
  - Learn to review stage for misplaced balloons, under-inflated balloons or changes to course of fire.

- **Question and Answer Session – All Riders**

Now you are becoming a team for this new sport (YES - you and your horse are a team - **IF YOU'RE NOT, YOU SHOULD BE!**). At this point, you and your horse should be working on being around as much gunfire as possible and gaining confidence on as many aspects of mounted shooting as possible. Attend all practices; go to the matches, even if you and your horse are not participating.

**The most important aspect of Cowboy Mounted Shooting is the trust the horse and rider develop**

One of the unique aspects of Mounted Shooting is the friendships that are formed and the willingness to help fellow shooters. This is what separates Cowboy Mounted Shooting from any other equine sport.

We look forward to you joining our Club and being a part of our unique fellowship!

