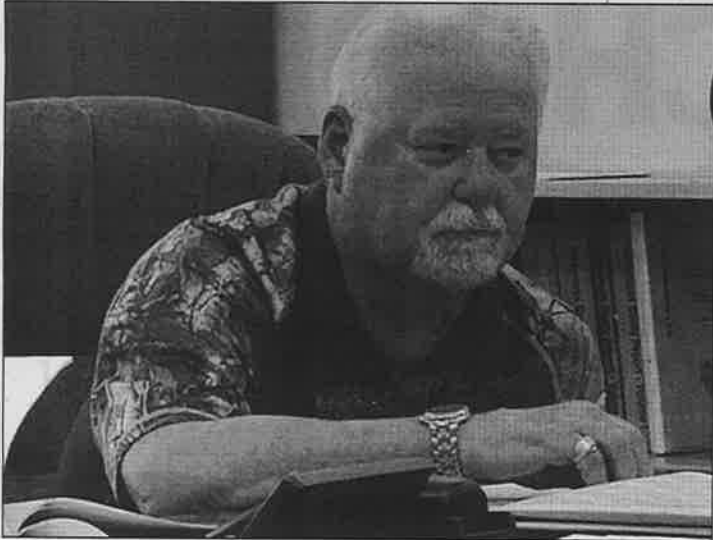


# Hodge, Schlupe lead hunter safety program



The Enterprise/File

**Don Hodge believes firearms safety to be key. Hodge, along with Vale resident Topper Schlupe, teach two hunter safety classes a year. The classes are held at the Malheur Education Service District building in Vale.**

**By Pat Caldwell**  
The Enterprise

VALE – Don Hodge believes people should know how to handle firearms.

That's why Hodge takes teaching the fundamentals of hunter safety seriously. Beginning this August, he's logging his 20th year instructing area youth and adults on how to be safe with weapons. Hodge and Vale resident Topper Schlupe teach two hunter safety classes a year.

"We have them as young as eight. We have probably 20% of the parents that will go through the class with their kid. We encourage that," said Hodge.

The second class of this year began this week.

"We don't ever turn anyone

down," said Hodge.

The classes cover the basics of hunter and firearm safety – such as how to load or unload a weapon and what to do if you become lost – and culminate in a field day. During the field day – typically held on a Saturday – participants get to test fire several different weapons.

"They shoot a muzzle loader, archery, a .22, a shotgun and a rifle," said Hodge.

Skeet shooting is also part of the field day.

"We find predominantly the women outshoot the men," said Hodge. Learning how to handle firearms makes sense, said Hodge.

"Hunting is a big part of our heritage out here. Even if you

don't want to hunt, chances are in your lifetime you will come across a weapon and you need to know how to handle it," said Hodge. Schlupe said class size varies depending on the time of year. The February class, he said, held 56 people.

"In August, we usually run between 15 to 20," said Schlupe.

Schlupe said the hunter safety classes go "way beyond hunting."

"It is ethics, day-to-day life skills and choices. I feel it is really important today, not only to carry on the heritage of hunting, but there are so many other skills that go along with it," said Schlupe.

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