

What's New?

August 25, 2021

Howdy Pards and Pardettes!

Boy did we luck out for the August shoot! Weather was nice. We had an easterly breeze, and it wasn't God awful hot. If you didn't come to the shoot, you missed one of the better ones this year! Calhoun Slim and Little Lou visited us again and it was great to talk and shoot with them. Spenerdy put out a "range history" book for everyone to see just where the club has been and how we got to where we are today. We love to see you all and it was great to catch up with folks. The sale table seems to always have something of interest too. And like I've always said, you don't necessarily have to shoot to come and visit a bit and catch up with friends.

We continue with various range projects. Let Spenerdy know if you want to come help out. We have more fun than work on our workdays.

Most of the time, my monthly newsletter is brief and just covers what has been going on at the NTR Range. Lately though, folks have been approaching me to cover subjects associated with our Cowboy Action Shooting sport in relation to safety, rules, technical, and sometimes just overall behavior. So, feel free to approach me with subjects that you wish to know more about, and I will try to address those either from my own experience, the rulebook, or by tapping into the more experienced folks we know and love!

Sometimes folks think that old Surly Bob is a bit unapproachable or a bit judgmental by the alias I have, but those who know me well, know that if you have a case to make, I'm willing to listen, and I truly love our sport and our freedom. Your constructive opinions and the problems you see are important to us at NTR. We want to hear how we might improve and make this more fun for everyone involved. We may not have all the answers or the resources, but I do want to hear what's bugging you about the sport or at NTR. I'll make sure it's confidential if that helps.

I'm going to try to address most subjects from a SASS perspective, but if there is something specific to NTR, I'll point that out. I was given A LOT of subject matter to talk about this month, so here we go!

WORKING ON A SHOOTING POSSE

EVERYONE WORKS. Please keep that in mind. Some folks like to stay busy and that is OK. Others are OK to watch those busy people do most of the work. But please look for a job to do. There is nothing more irritating to a seasoned RO when there is an obvious delay in shooting because we don't have enough brass pickers, gun helpers, target setters, spotters, timer operators, scorekeepers, or supervision at the loading and unloading tables. Some folks can be seen just taking their leisure at the expense of the other posse members. If you can't work due to a physical problem, tell the posse leader/RO. Don't make them come to you. That's just a good thing to do. Work is a four-letter word to some folks but that is not THE COWBOY WAY. Many of you enjoy going to the shoots. You enjoy the props, the stage designs, and other things provided during the shoot. Does the range management need help? Setup and takedown are hard work. Help them out when you can. If you can't physically help them out, then at least tell them how much you appreciate the hard work that goes into putting on that shoot, how great the range looks, or just tell them how much it means to you to have a nice place to come and enjoy your freedom. That is also THE COWBOY WAY.

STAGE DESIGN AND PROP FUNCTIONING

If you are a range worker, please make sure everything is working. This is important as it is very easy to make mistakes. Does the stage work for all shooting classes? Too physically stressful? Confusing? God forbid but is there something that is potentially unsafe? Take the time to really examine the stages and targets and make

them safe and fun for everyone. Shooters, please help the range management as much as you can when you see a potential safety issue because the more people looking for problems makes for a better and safer shoot.

SPOTTING HITS AND MISSES

Why this is always such a problem in our sport, I have a hard time understanding. This month I was told by a spotter that they had to count misses because they just couldn't see the target get hit. Well, we are supposed to spot clear misses, not hits, folks. Looking for hits only is just the exact backwards of how we are supposed to be spotting the misses and counting the rounds. Not to mention everyone's job to ensure safety. Here are the words you should live by when functioning as a spotter on a shooting posse. These are old rules, they are TRUE, many are hard rules, and they are not a joke.

- If you think it is a hit, it is a HIT.
- If you think it is a miss, it is a HIT.
- If you can't tell if it is a miss or a hit, it is a HIT.
- If you just didn't see it clearly, it is a HIT.
- If you are unsure about the shot in any way, it is a HIT.
- **IF YOU KNOW IT IS A MISS WITHOUT ANY SHRED OF DOUBT IN YOUR MIND, THEN, AND ONLY THEN, IS IT A MISS.**
- COUNT THE SHOOTER'S SHOTS when you are a spotter. The more people counting shots, the better to catch safety problems before they happen.
- Don't look at the other spotters to make your final decision. Call it like you see it. Call it **BEFORE** looking at the other spotters. If the RO sees you look at another spotter before you make the call, you should be asked to give up the counting stick because you just screwed up doing that job. We have **THREE** spotters for a reason. Don't be a screw up. Do it right.
- If you need to discuss with the other spotters before deciding, do that **BEFORE** you call your hits and misses. Once the spotting results are called by the RO and recorded by the scorekeeper, it's OVER.
- Serious spotters don't bunch up in one spot on the stage, if possible. Spread out at different spots in the stage if you can still get a good view of the targets and the shooter. Sometimes the key to good spotting is that you are in a different place to see a miss than the other spotters are. This helps get it right.
- If you are a shooter, don't get your nose out of joint because you got called for a miss and you don't think you had a miss. People make mistakes. Including the shooter. Where a spotter is, and the field of view available to them, can limit what they are able to see. As a shooter, all you see is what's in front of the gun. Ever have a clear miss, see it for yourself as a miss, and wonder how you could have missed the target? Ever have a miss that you could see, and the spotters called it a hit? Now tell the truth! Sometimes a hit can look like a clear miss, and vice versa. We've all seen it happen. There are much more important things to worry about. In my personal experience, I blame myself if my shooting style makes it difficult for the spotters. So, I try to make it as easy for the spotters as I can when I'm shooting Black Powder, or shooting fast, or both. And that's the only thing I've found that really works.
- Some say, "Well, I can't spot for him because he is my friend, and I don't want to call him for misses." OK, well, just pass the shooting stick. Otherwise, both you and your friend need to put your big cowboy pants on and just grow up. Heck, I expect my friends to be twice as hard on my shooting, so I know what I'm doing wrong, and which gun I messed up with. That's what friends are for.
- If you can't handle these simple rules, just don't pick up a counting stick. There are plenty of jobs to go around on a shooting posse. Go pick brass, set targets, or supervise the loading and unloading tables.

SHOOTING ORDER

At NTR, we prefer following the documented shooting order. At some clubs this is a choice by the posse in general. When everyone on the shooting posse knows each other, it's easy enough to shoot out of order. This is because whoever is keeping score probably already knows each person very well and won't mark the wrong score on the wrong person. However, if you follow the shooting order, it doesn't really matter how well the scorekeeper knows each person on the posse, because the odds of making a mistake drop dramatically. I've seen confusion at major SASS events because folks don't know each other. And it's a chaotic mess as folks stand 6 deep in line waiting to shoot and there is nobody to spot, pick brass, and set targets! In my experience,

the best and most fair way to shoot is by following a documented shooting order. It makes things run smoother, there is less confusion, and the odds of making a mistake on scoring drop dramatically. Don't get on the bad side of the range management because you made a mistake and had to "chicken scratch" the score sheet! Also, it makes it look like someone is cheating on the written scores!

RULES FOR SHOOTING CATEGORIES

BE RESPONSIBLE. When you pick a shooting category, please study the requirements of that category BEFORE you shoot. For example, in Black Powder categories, you are prohibited from shooting a '97 pump shotgun. Yet people have shown up to shoot BP with a '97. If you are a gunfighter, please study the requirements of that special category. If you shoot Classic Cowboy or one of the other more costume driven categories, please be VERY familiar with both costuming AND gun requirements. Don't think you know the rules. Read them on a regular basis, or at least once a year. Ask others in your category. When was the last time you read up on your favorite shooting category? You should read the SASS shooter's handbook and the SASS RO handbooks to see what the expectations really are. It makes you a better shooter and a fun person.

GUNS AND AMMO

Again, please be RESPONSIBLE. If you are having trouble with a gun or ammo, don't use it in a cowboy action shoot to 'work the bugs out' of it. That is a very bad and unsafe decision. Just don't do it. Work that problem or experiment out at the shooting range or at home BEFORE you come to a cowboy action shoot. At NTR we encourage our members to come out on a workday to help and to practice with guns and ammo if they need to do that. It is a great time to work the bugs out of things or try that new ammo in your guns. Be confident that your guns and ammo are functioning as well as possible. Loading mistakes and gun break downs will happen during a shoot, but you have the power to eliminate mistakes and promote safety.

THANKS!

These are just some of the things that folks have mentioned to me over the last month. It's just one old Marshal's opinion, but perhaps things that we might need to do a little better. COVID and life's disruptions have made us a little rusty around the edges. Let me know if there is any other subject matter you would like to see in the newsletter. You've got my email. Thank you for doing your best to be safe and responsible shooters!

You all are still the best bunch of friends this old cowboy could ever wish for, and I truly treasure your friendship, wisdom, and advice. If I had to put together a cattle drive, I'd want you on the crew! We may not always agree on these subjects, but I know we can always work out the problems. See you on the trail!

Your Pard,

Surly Bob
Marshal, Nebraska Territorial Rangers

And Remember:

The Code Of The West

- 1. Live each day with courage.**
- 2. Take pride in your work.**
- 3. Always finish what you started.**
- 4. Do what has to be done.**
- 5. Be tough, but fair.**
- 6. When you make a promise, keep it.**
- 7. Ride for the Brand.**
- 8. Talk less but say more.**
- 9. Remember that some things just aren't for sale.**
- 10. Know where to draw the line.**

