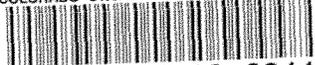


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2002 HUNTING INCIDENT REPORT

“More Good Examples of Bad Judgment”

Colorado Hunter Education Program
Patt Dorsey, Administrator

COLORADO DIVISION OF WILDLIFE
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Department of Natural Resources
STATE OF COLORADO

2002 Hunting Incident Report

Colorado Division of Wildlife, Hunter Education Program, Patt Dorsey, Administrator

4 March, 2003

The 2002 hunting seasons were a statistic oddity with respect to the trend in hunting incidents. Since the Colorado Legislature mandated hunter education in 1970, hunting incident rates have steadily declined. In the 1960s, we averaged 10.1 fatal and 24.2 nonfatal hunting incidents per year. In the 1970s we averaged only 4.5 fatal accidents/year and 2.3/year in the 1980s. In the 1990's, Colorado's average number of fatal hunting incidents was a mere 1.3.

With over 500,000 hunting licenses sold, hunting is one of the safest outdoor activities. We are happy to report zero hunting fatalities in 2002. However, we are disappointed to report 18 nonfatal hunting incidents (the highest number since 1991). Incidents varied by geography, species hunted, land ownership, age of shooters, causality factor, etc., making gaps in the hunter education curriculum (if any) difficult to spot. However, four of the 16 hunting incidents occurred on the opening day of the dove season.

As always, we regret reporting a single hunting incident, particularly when most, if not all were preventable. Not a single non-hunter was injured. Half of all firearm-related hunting injuries were self inflicted. Two-thirds of the injuries were inflicted on a person within the hunter's party, usually a relative or friend.

The purpose of this report is to enhance hunting safety by facilitating an awareness of two key points.

1. *Bad things happen to good people. The victims and shooters involved in these hunting incidents are people. These good, everyday people were involved in a hunting incident. You could be too! Take a moment to learn from these mistakes.*
2. *Always, think safety first! Safe hunting requires a hunter's constant attention. A momentary lapse in concentration, e.g., flushing game, handling a firearm near a motor vehicle, etc. can have serious consequences.*

The Colorado Division of Wildlife strongly advocates that all hunters treat all firearms as if they were loaded and observe these three basic firearm safety rules:

- ◆ Always control the muzzle of your firearm.
- ◆ Be sure of your target and what is in front of and beyond it.
- ◆ Keep your finger off the trigger until you are sure of your target and are ready to shoot.

What is a hunting incident?

We define a hunting incident as a firearm-related incident, causing injury or death to a person or persons that occurs while hunting. We use “incident” as opposed to “accident” because not all cases are determined “accidental” in nature. Accidents are “unforeseen” events. Some hunting incidents are determined otherwise by law enforcement and the court system.

Hunting incidents do not include the variety of other incidents occurring each year while hunting such as cuts, falls, motor vehicle, horse injuries, etc. Likewise, we do not report non-hunting firearm-related injuries or livestock injuries as hunting incidents.

Hunting is safe and getting safer in Colorado.

A primary goal of hunter education is to reduce incident rates, protect human lives and prevent injuries. Colorado began conducting voluntary hunter education training in the 1950s. In 1970 our State Legislature mandated hunter education for all persons born on or after January 1, 1949. To read the complete text, see Colorado Revised Statutes, 33-6-107 (8).

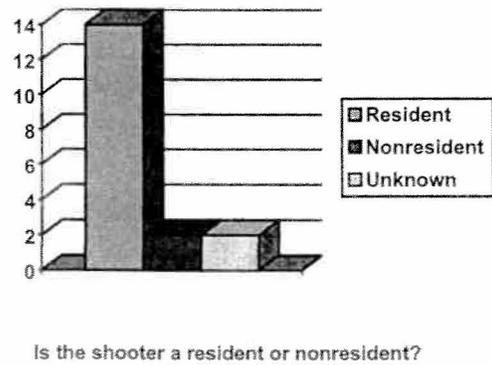
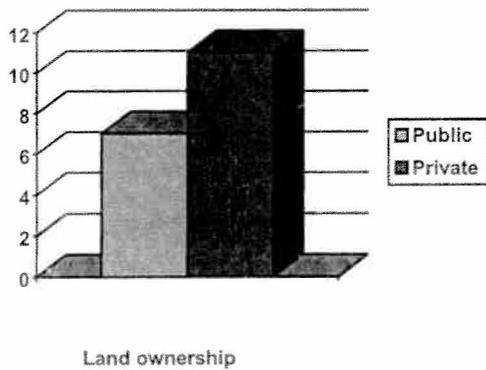
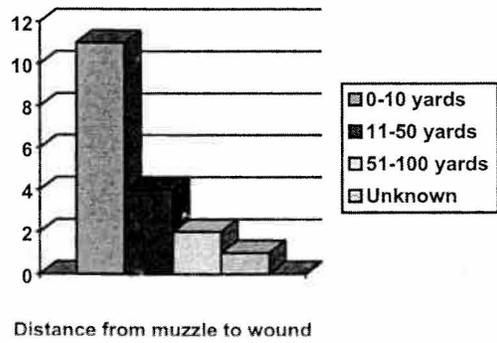
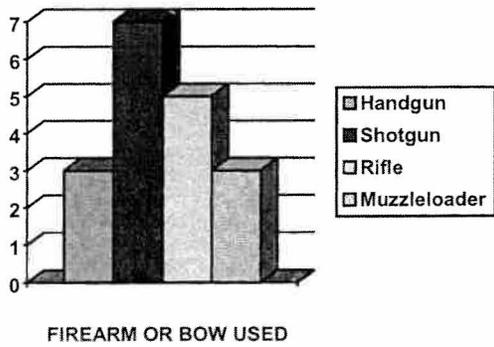
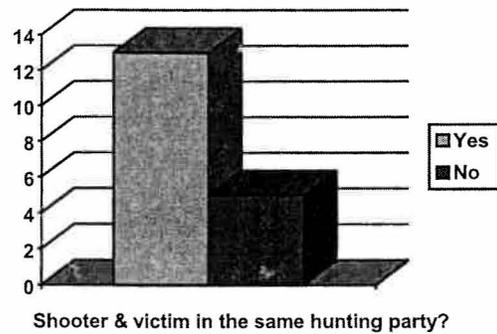
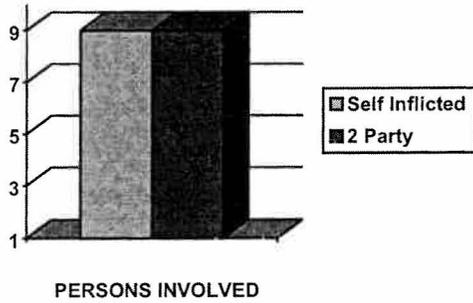
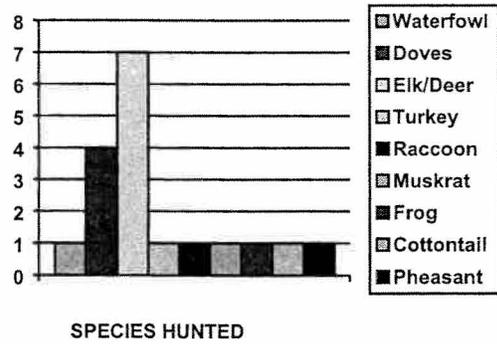
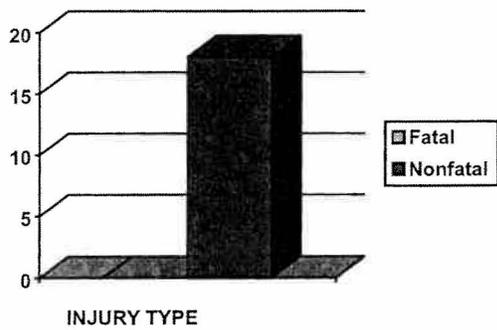
The mission of the Division is to protect, preserve, enhance and manage wildlife and the environment for the use, benefit and enjoyment of the people of this state and its visitors. The Hunter Education Program assists the Division in fulfilling its mission by educating hunters to be safe, responsible, knowledgeable, and involved.

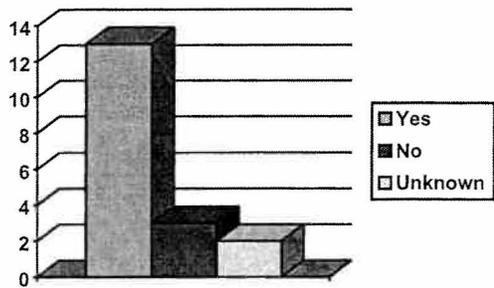
2002 HUNTING INCIDENT SUMMARY

Big Game	-	0 Fatal	7 Nonfatal
Small Game	-	0 Fatal	11 Nonfatal
TOTAL		0	18 Nonfatal

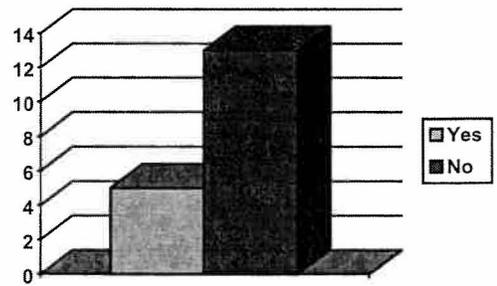
CAUSES

			TOTAL
Faulty Equipment	0 Fatal	3 Nonfatal	3
Victim Out of Sight	0 Fatal	3 Nonfatal	3
Dropped Firearm	0 Fatal	3 Nonfatal	3
Swinging on game	0 Fatal	3 Nonfatal	3
Careless handling of firearm	0 Fatal	3 Nonfatal	3
Stumbled and fell	0 Fatal	1 Nonfatal	1
Trigger caught on object	0 Fatal	1 Nonfatal	1
Unknown	0 Fatal	1 Nonfatal	1
TOTAL	0 Fatal	18 Nonfatal	18





Shooter has Hunter Education?



Law violated?

Hunting Incidents by County	
Archuleta	1
Delta	1
Douglas	1
Eagle	1
Elbert	1
Garfield	1
Lincoln	2
Logan	1
Mesa	1
Montrose	1
Phillips	1
Routt	2
Saguache	1
Washington	1
Weld	2

Age of Shooters	
1 – 9 years	0
10 – 19 years	2
20 – 29 years	3
30 – 39 years	2
40 – 49 years	4
50 - 59 years	3
60 + years	2
Unknown	2

INDIVIDUAL INCIDENT DETAILS, 2002 HUNTING SEASONS

Nonfatal Accident

Occurred February 2, 2002 in SAGUACHE County, Colorado. Victim and shooter were members of the same hunting party and were hunting GEESE with a SHOTGUN. Victim was within 10 yards from the muzzle of the gun, when the incident occurred.

Shooter (age 59) has bad knees. As geese came over, he got his gun, stumbled and fell. The gun discharged. **Injuries:** Victim (age 13) received multiple pellet wounds along the right side of his body: head, chest, arm and leg. **Primary causality factor:** Stumbled and fell.

Nonfatal Accident

Occurred April 11, 2002 in DELTA County, Colorado. Victim and shooter were not members of the same hunting party. Victim was over 100 yards from the muzzle of the gun, when the incident occurred.

Shooter (age 24) was cleaning a ditch, when he saw a muskrat and shot at it. He stated that he shot twice and missed. Victim was cleaning out the ditch approximately 1/2 mile away. He felt a bullet hit his leg and another pass over his head, then he yelled at whoever was shooting. He did not hear any more shots. Delta County deputies and detectives talked to other people in the area and were able to locate the shooter. From where victim and shooter were in ditch, they could not see each other. **Injuries:** Victim was hit in thigh with a .223 bullet. Bullet was not removed and there was little tissue damage as most of the energy was spent. (Victim felt this was truly an accident and did not wish to file charges. No charges were filed.) **Primary causality factor:** Victim out of sight of shooter.

Nonfatal Accident

Occurred April 13, 2002 in DOUGLAS County, Colorado. Victim and shooter were not members of the same hunting party. However, both parties were hunting TURKEY with SHOTGUNS in the same area. Victim was 51-100 yards from the muzzle of the gun, when the incident occurred.

Shooter (age 43) saw a turkey and stalked it. He watched carefully, saw it move and even thought he had seen a beard. Victim (age 13) and her father had set up a turkey decoy on a well-traveled trail. They were both dressed in camouflage clothing and fell asleep 25 yards behind it. Decoy had actually moved in a breeze. Father put "Band-aid" on the wounds, while shooter offered assistance and use of cell phone. Shooter helped victim and father out of woods. **Injuries:** Victim was hit with 2 stray pellets on back. (No charges were filed.) **Primary causality factor:** Victim out of sight of shooter.

Nonfatal Accident

Occurred June 16, 2002 in LOGAN County, Colorado. Wound was SELF INFLICTED. Victim/shooter was hunting RACCOON with a PISTOL. Victim was within 10 yards from the muzzle of the gun, when the incident occurred.

Shooter (age 22) was holstering pistol in preparation for training hunting dogs. Firearm dropped and discharged. **Injuries:** Bullet creased shooter/victim's scalp behind the right ear. Victim drove himself approximately 300 yards to landowner's house and notified the Logan County Sheriff's Office. **Primary causality factor:** Dropped firearm.

Nonfatal Accident

Occurred August 3, 2002 in LINCOLN County, Colorado. Victim and shooter were members of the same party. They were at a pond, when shooter shot at a FROG with a .22 caliber RIFLE. Victim was 11-50 yards from the muzzle of the gun, when the incident occurred.

Shooter (age 18) saw a frog and shot at it in the water. The bullet hit the surface of the pond and ricocheted, striking the victim (age 20) in the groin. Victim was walking on the opposite side of the pond. **Injuries:** Victim was hit with .22 caliber bullet in the leg and groin. He received a 1-1/2 inch scratch on upper left leg and a quarter-sized hole in his scrotum. (DA's office was considering filing a 4th degree felony charge per C.R.S. 18-3-203(1)(d) Second degree assault and a misdemeanor charge per C.R.S. 33-6-122, Hunting in a careless manner. Unknown what, if any, charges were filed.) **Primary causality factor:** Careless handling of firearm.

Nonfatal Accident

Occurred September 1, 2002 in WELD County, Colorado. Victim and shooter were not members of the same hunting party. However, both parties were hunting DOVES with SHOTGUNS in the same area. Victim was 11-50 yards from the muzzle of the gun, when the incident occurred.

Shooter (age 69) swung on low flying dove. Six people were hunting cover. Victim (age 62) was about 20 yards away. **Injuries:** Victim was hit with one pellet on the forehead, between the eyes (No charges were filed. Investigator was uncertain if stray pellet came from shooter or one of others.) **Primary causality factor:** Swinging on game.

Nonfatal Accident

Occurred September 1, 2002 in LINCOLN County, Colorado. Victim and shooter were members of the same hunting party. Both parties were hunting DOVES with SHOTGUNS. Victim was 11-50 yards from the muzzle of the gun, when the incident occurred.

Shooter (unknown) – total of four in hunting party, hunting a windbreak of Austrian pines. Victim (age 34) stated he was “beating the bushes, not actually hunting” when he was hit in both legs with shotgun pellets. **Injuries:** Victim was hit with twelve pellets on legs. Six pellets penetrated about 2” deep, remaining pellets were deflected. (No charges were filed.) **Primary causality factor:** Victim out of sight of shooter.

Nonfatal Accident

Occurred September 1, 2002 in ELBERT County, Colorado. Victim and shooter were not members of the same hunting party. However, both parties were hunting DOVES with SHOTGUNS in the same area. Victim was 51-100 yards from the muzzle of the gun, when the incident occurred.

Shooter (age 68) shot at a dove that flew between him and the victim. Victim (age 59) was walking back to group from truck. **Injuries:** Victim was hit on the back by one pellet that broke

the skin. (Shooter was charged per C.R.S. 33-6-122, Hunting in a careless manner.) **Primary causality factor:** Swinging on game.

Nonfatal Accident

Occurred September 1, 2002 in WASHINGTON County, Colorado. Wound was SELF INFLICTED. Victim/shooter was hunting DOVES with a SHOTGUN. Victim was less than 10 yards from the muzzle of the gun, when the incident occurred.

Shooter/victim (age 58) was hunting doves with a borrowed auto-loading shotgun. He was standing on the passenger side of the pick-up truck, with the door open. Shooter had muzzle of shotgun pointing down and bumped his elbow on the door. Shotgun discharged above his left foot. **Injuries:** Pellets went through left foot, just above big toe – exited through ball of foot. **Primary causality factor:** Dropped firearm.

Nonfatal Accident

Occurred September 14, 2002 in EAGLE County, Colorado. Wound was SELF INFLICTED. Victim/shooter was hunting ELK with a MUZZLELOADER. Victim was less than 10 yards from the muzzle of the gun, when the incident occurred.

Shooter/victim (age 49) was hunting elk with a muzzleloader. He was found by two other hunters who thought they heard someone yelling “Help! My head!” They heard more yells and a cough and found the victim. They kept compression on the wound until help arrived. **Injuries:** Unknown, victim flown to Denver for surgery. **Primary causality factor:** Unknown.

Nonfatal Accident

Occurred September 17, 2002 in GARFIELD, County, Colorado. Wound was SELF INFLICTED. Victim/shooter was hunting ELK with a MUZZLELOADER. Victim was less than 10 yards from the muzzle of the gun, when the incident occurred.

Shooter's party was loading the vehicle. Shooter/victim (age 40) moved rifle around on driver's side of truck. Rifle slipped out of case and hit ground on butt stock, causing it to discharge. Firearm must have been loaded in motor vehicle, a violation of C.R.S. 33-6-125. **Injuries:** Bullet entered under belly button, then split into three pieces (1-liver, 1-stomach, 1-diaphragm). **Primary causality factor:** Dropped firearm.

Nonfatal Accident

Occurred October 14, 2002 in ROUTT County, Colorado. Victim and shooter were members of the same hunting party. Both parties were hunting ELK with RIFLES. Victim was less than 10 yards from the muzzle of the gun, when the incident occurred.

Shooter (44) laid rifle on cot in camping trailer. Victim (age 13) sat on the muzzle of the rifle. Shooter noticed that victim was sitting on muzzle and told victim not to do that. He reached

down to pick up the rifle with his left hand, when the rifle discharged. Shooter did not think that anything caught the trigger, nor does he remember grasping the grip. He stated he could have accidentally pulled the trigger. **Injuries:** Bullet entered right buttocks, exited left buttocks. Wounds described as very serious. **Primary causality factor:** Careless handling of firearm.

Nonfatal Accident

Occurred October 18, 2002 in ROUTT County, Colorado. Wound was SELF INFLICTED. Victim/shooter was hunting ELK with a RIFLE. Victim was less than 10 yards from the muzzle of the gun, when the incident occurred.

Shooter/victim (age 44) had rifle slung on right shoulder and was attempting to move it to his left shoulder. He was carrying a set of deer antlers. Antlers entered the trigger guard and the firearm discharged three times. **Injuries:** Bullet went through the humerus bone near the armpit. He was found at his truck, by other hunters, who directed EMS. Victim's injuries were very serious, but he was reported to be in stable condition on October 23, 2002. **Primary causality factor:** Trigger caught object.

Nonfatal Accident

Occurred October 19, 2002 in WELD County, Colorado. Wound was SELF INFLICTED. Victim/shooter was hunting DEER with a MUZZLELOADER. Victim was less than 10 yards from the muzzle of the gun, when the incident occurred.

Shooter/victim (age 36). Breech plug and bolt blew out of gun and imbedded in face after a "hang fire." To shooter's recollection, gun was loaded with 100 grains of Pyrodex and a 200 grain Maxi-ball lead bullet. Firearm was on recall list. **Injuries:** Broken thumb and facial damage. **Primary causality factor:** Faulty equipment.

Nonfatal Accident

Occurred November 3, 2002 in ARCHULETA County, Colorado. Wound was SELF INFLICTED. Victim/shooter was hunting ELK with a RIFLE. Incident occurred with a pistol he was carrying. Victim was less than 10 yards from the muzzle of the gun, when the incident occurred.

Shooter/victim (age 59) was riding a mule through thick brush, with a .357 in a belt holster. He noticed the thumb strap had come undone. He took the gun from the holster with his left hand and shot himself in the right hand. DWM found no defect with handgun. Holster was "unusual" and DWM surmised that victim may have cocked the hammer with the thumb strap. **Injuries:** Shot between web of index finger and thumb. **Primary causality factor:** Careless handling of firearm.

Nonfatal Accident

Occurred November 10, 2002 in PHILLIPS County, Colorado. Victim and shooter were members of the same hunting party. Both parties were hunting PHEASANTS with SHOTGUNS. Victim was 11-50 yards from the muzzle of the gun, when the incident occurred.

Six hunters were hunting a creek bottom. The victim was ahead of the group with the dog. Victim (age 32) heard quail flush behind him. He stopped and waited for birds to flush in front of him as his dog was on point. He heard a gunshot and felt pellets hit him from behind. Shooter unknown. **Injuries:** He was hit with three pellets (broke skin) one hit left ankle, one hit right knee and one hit upper chest (left side). **Primary causality factor:** Shooter covered victim, swinging on game.

Nonfatal Accident

Occurred November 11, 2002 in MESA County, Colorado. Wound was SELF INFLICTED. Victim/shooter was hunting DEER/ELK with a RIFLE. Victim was less than 10 yards from the muzzle of the gun, when the incident occurred.

Shooter/victim (age 24) had been having trouble with his firearm (firing pin broken?). Shooter/victim test fired his rifle and the breech section came apart. Firearm was a 300 Win Mag caliber. **Injuries:** Gun bolt entered face, breaking eye socket, jaw and teeth. Dislocated thumb. **Primary causality factor:** Faulty equipment.

Nonfatal Accident

Occurred November 19, 2002 in MONTROSE County, Colorado. Wound was SELF INFLICTED. Victim/shooter was hunting COTTONTAIL with a .22 PISTOL. Victim was less than 10 yards from the muzzle of the gun, when the incident occurred.

Shooter/victim (age 19) was sitting, trying to clear a jam from the pistol. He attempted to stand and fell back into a sitting position causing the safety to come off, the muzzle to swing and the pistol to discharge. **Injuries:** Bullet wound to front of left thigh, approximately 6" above the knee. **Primary causality factor:** Faulty equipment.