

# Virginia City Marshals

## Cowboy Action Shooting Fact Sheet for Visitors

The Cowboy (and Cowgirl!) SHOOTERS you see are gathered into what we call a POSSE. If we have a large number of Shooters, we divide up into two or more Posses.

Depending on preferred shooting style and other factors, Shooters select a CATEGORY in which to compete. Some are shooting one-handed (called Duelist) and some are shooting with both hands (Gunfighter). Some Categories are age related, like over 60 and over 70, and some are gender-specific. Some Categories are defined by the costume style (like “B” Western), and some by the kinds of firearms or ammunition used. Thus Cowboy Action Shooters are not competing against all others, but only with those in their respective categories.

When we meet to shoot, the entire competition is called a MATCH. A Match consists of several STAGES (in our Matches, there are usually four Stages). One Shooter from the Posse shoots one Stage at a time. Each Stage has a written scenario describing how the Shooters must hit the Rifle, Pistol, and Shotgun Targets in a prescribed sequence.

While one Shooter is actually shooting the Stage, several others are performing other roles. One is the TIMER OPERATOR, who closely follows the Shooter to ensure all safety rules are strictly followed, and holds an electronic timer to record the Shooter’s overall time. You will also see several SPOTTERS (usually three) who watch the targets to see if the Shooter misses any or doesn’t follow the Stage instructions. If the Shooter hits all the targets as directed, they have shot the Stage CLEAN, and you will see the Spotters indicate this by raising closed fists. If the Shooter misses any targets, you will see the Spotters raise the number of fingers that corresponds to the number of MISSES. If the Shooter does not follow the Stage instructions exactly (like shooting targets in the wrong order), they receive a PROCEDURAL. The resulting PENALTIES are five seconds added to your total time for each Miss, and ten seconds for each Procedural. All participants are shooting ON THE CLOCK. Winners in each Category are determined by the lowest times for each Stage and for the overall Match.

For maximum safety, you will note that the Shooters load their firearms at the LOADING TABLE under supervision, and immediately after completing the Stage, they head for the UNLOADING TABLE, where their firearms are inspected to insure they are empty and safe. You will also note that Shooters always have their firearms pointed downrange or up in the air for safety. It is a very serious penalty if any participants forget their safety and point their firearms toward any person (including themselves). Doing so means either a Stage DISQUALIFICATION, or if more serious, a Match Disqualification.

If you have questions, please don’t hesitate to ask—we don’t bite, and we are very friendly. Treating our SPECTATORS with courtesy is THE COWBOY WAY!

HAPPY TRAILS!

*For more information, please visit [vacitymarshals.com](http://vacitymarshals.com). Adapted from the [Cowboy Chronicle, July 2015](#), p. 61.*