

# USHA RULES & REGULATIONS JUNE 2023

## PART I Section 1: General

1.1. These Rules are mandatory for USHA-sanctioned competitions. All shooters and key event staff (Shoot Director, referees, Protest Committee, etc.) are expected to know and enforce these rules, as appropriate.

1.2. Only gauges 12 and smaller may be used. Maximum loads for 12 gauges are 1oz, 7-1/2 (Euro: 28g, 2.7 mm). Referees may check cartridges at any time and reserve the right to disqualify those found to be in violation.

1.3. Only factory-loaded shells are permitted at USHA-sanctioned events.

1.4. Category ages are as follows:

- Junior            20 and younger;
- Men's            21 to 55;
- Ladies           Juniors (20 and younger) may register either/or;
- Seniors          56-65;
- Veterans        66-72;
- Masters         73 onwards.

Note: All age categories take effect on 1 January of the year in which a particular age is reached. For example, if you will turn 66 in March, you will shoot as a Veteran beginning the preceding January.

## Section 2: Safety

2.1. It is the responsibility of the shooter to remain safe at all times. Shooters will only operate from the Shooting Stand. All starting positions (gun down, fully mounted, etc.) are allowable provided they are deemed safe by the referee.

2.2. Shooters will load only upon the Shooting Stand and then only if the ring is clear of personnel. While loading, shooters shall point their gun in a safe direction. Before turning around, the shooter will unload and leave the action open.

2.3. No shooter may fire upon a target that lies outside of the designated boundaries. This rule is in effect to protect both staff and shooters, particularly when adjacent rings are in use. Referees may record scores as

"LOST" for any shooter found in violation.

2.4. The USHA recommends eye and ear protection at all USHA events, but club rules will govern related to the requirement of ear and eye protection.

## Section 3: Gun & Cartridge Malfunctions

Gun malfunctions include any mechanical issue preventing the gun from firing one or both barrels, or preventing the shooter from loading / unloading ammunition properly.

Ammunition malfunctions include any defect in the ammunition preventing detonation or full detonation.

**Regardless of the cause of the malfunction or the barrel in which it originated, all shooters should immediately:**

- Point their guns upwards and request referee inspection
- Not adjust the safety
- Not open the action

If the shooter fails to take these actions upon a potential malfunction, the bird is lost, provided the rules below do not apply.

3.1. First Barrel Malfunctions (as confirmed by the referee):

a. If the first barrel malfunction was due to either the gun or its ammunition, another target will be allowed along with two cartridges for the attempt.

b. Should a shooter elect to ignore a first barrel malfunction and make an attempt with the second barrel (thereby forgoing a referee inspection), the result shall stand.

3.2 Second Barrel Malfunctions (as confirmed by the referee):

a. If the referee determines that a second barrel malfunction was due to either the shotgun or ammunition, the call is "Bird Again."

b. With "Bird Again," the competitor repeats the target but must shoot the first cartridge in a safe direction above the machines and break the helice with the second cartridge. If the competitor misses on the second shot or breaks the helice with the first cartridge, then the referee will record "LOST."

3.3. Shooters are allowed two (2) misfires due to gun or ammunition malfunction. Beginning with the 3rd malfunction, the results shall stand. Referees will record any gun or ammunition malfunctions on shooter cards as either GM or AM, respectively above or below the shot in question.

3.4. A shooter may replace a malfunctioning gun mid-turn provided the malfunction is confirmed by the referee AND the replacement is close at hand. A shooter has 5 minutes to replace or repair their gun if needed. If it is not possible to replace or repair within 5 minutes, the shooter will go to the end of the crank.

If the shooter has to be put at the end of the crank and is shooting manual machines, the referee shall note the machines shot so that when the shooter returns, the machines can be loaded to allow him to resume his turn with the same targets as when shooting stopped. For automatic machines, shooting shall continue with all traps ready and doors closed.

3.5. Choke changes mid-turn are prohibited.

## Section 4: Shooter Malfunctions

4.1. A missed target due to an engaged safety mechanism or a lack of ammunition shall be recorded as "LOST."

4.2. A shooter who inexplicably fails to attempt a legal target after the command "PULL" will receive a "LOST BIRD" for that particular target.

4.3. Simultaneous discharge of both barrels is typically a gun malfunction and should be noted as such on the shooter's scorecard. Any target killed following a simultaneous discharge is considered a "NO BIRD."

4.4. Trapping the trigger (failure to allow the trigger to reset after firing the first barrel) is shooter error and will be recorded as "LOST." If suspected, referees will direct the shooter to point the gun in a safe direction, release the trigger, and make a second attempt. If the gun fires, the bird is "LOST."

4.5. If a shooter does not appear for their turn after their name has been called three times, the referee will record a "zero" for every target in that turn when the next shooter walks on the shooting stand. Referees must quickly notify the Shoot Director of such occurrences. Shoot Directors will then inform the Protest Committee of same. Only with extenuating circumstances and approval of the Shoot Director and Protest Committee

may a shooter change their order in the shoot. A shooter may not attempt to change their position in the rotation in order to shoot in favorable conditions once the shoot order is set.

4.6. Targets shot out of turn shall be recorded as "LOST" unless cleared previously by the referee OR the Protest Committee deems the mix-up to be an honest mistake. If the latter, a "NO BIRD" shall apply to each target killed. Regardless, the shooter will resume their correct place in line for each crank thereafter. An exception to this rule may be made if shoot management approves a shooter changing place within the crank for extenuating circumstances.

## Section 5: Machine & Target Malfunctions

5.1. If a machine releases a target before the command "PULL," the shooter may either refuse it or shoot it. If shot, the result shall stand. If refused, another target will be provided.

5.2. If a machine or machines release multiple targets simultaneously, the shooter may refuse them or shoot. If shot, the result shall stand. If refused, another target will be provided.

5.3. Shooters may inadvertently trigger the release of a second target while making an attempt on the first (i.e., shooting a machine). In these instances, only the initial target is considered legal.

5.4. Should any target partially break apart upon the command "PULL," it is a legal target if it flies normally. Conversely, if the target is flying abnormally when the first shot is fired, it is a "NO BIRD," even if killed.

5.5. Machines that malfunction during a shooter's turn are to be handled as per 8.5 and 8.6 (Event Host Responsibilities) outlined below.

## Section 6: Race Play

6.1. USHA Sanctioned Events take place from the 26-meter line. Shooters may not shoot forward of this line, but they may shoot from a position rearward of it if desired. There is no sliding at USHA sanctioned events.

6.2. Unlike FITASC, USHA competitors may test fire into the ground prior to their first bird of a given crank if granted permission to do so from the referee.

6.3. All shooters are encouraged to shoot at a pace that is neither rushed nor overtly slow. FITASC rules state 20 seconds per shooter. If the referee notices that the shooter is going exorbitantly slow, the shooter will be counseled to speed up. If they continue to take over 20 seconds after the second warning, they will be scored a lost bird for every time the limit is exceeded.

6.4. When shooting over manually loaded machines, the trapper will start them when the shooter takes the Shooting Stand. The shooter and trapper will interact as follows: Shooter: "Trapper Ready?" Trapper: "Ready!" Shooter: "Pull!"

6.5. On auto-loading machines, the shooter is allowed to press button after the computer indicates the system is ready (light on the stand turns on).

6.6. Shooters who fire unintentionally before calling "PULL" shall receive a "NO BIRD" and another target will be provided.

6.7. Shooters may only make attempts on the target while it is in its acceleration phase of flight.

6.8. "Hit" ("Kill" or "Dead") is recorded if the "witness cap" separates in the air completely from the "helice wing" and lands inside the ring's fenced perimeter. If any piece of the "helice carrier" remains affixed to the "witness cap," the target is recorded as "Zero" ("Lost").

6.9. "Hit" is recorded if the "witness cap" hits inside the enclosed area and bounces outside the fence.

6.10. "LOST" is recorded if the "witness cap" hits the fence and lands outside the enclosed area or remains attached to the fence having never touched the ground inside the ring.

6.11. A low target whose flight remains hidden from the shooter (i.e., obscured by a machine) is considered a legal bird, even when said target follows a "BIRD AGAIN" ruling.

6.12. A shooter may seek to apply the "Balk" rule if, while they are shooting, they were distracted by an unsafe situation, an alarm raised by a trapper or referee, or by any "command," from any origin, directed to the shooter personally. Absent an immediate "NO BIRD" call, the shooter will raise their gun and claim a "Balk." If confirmed by the referee, another target will be

allowed.

6.13. If a shooter disagrees with a particular call, they should initiate protest by raising their gun immediately following the call in question. Referees MUST attempt to resolve the dispute before the shooter is allowed to resume the crank. To that end:

a. Referees should request shooters to come forward who witnessed the shot and note their names on the back of the score card if needed. If no shooters are available and/or the dispute is not resolved, a provisional target will be offered.

b. Referees will record the result of the provisional target as "LOST" or "DEAD" on the scorecard above or below the shot in question and send word to the Shoot Director that a protest has been initiated.

c. The Shoot Director will present the shooter card to the Protest Committee to officially lodge the protest on behalf of the shooter. The Protest Committee will then corral witnesses, hear testimony, and render judgment in a timely manner.

6.14. It is the shooter's responsibility to verify his or her scorecard entries. Any scorecard discrepancy disputes must be lodged before the next shooter begins their crank.

6.15. Shoot-offs: USHA recommends the following format. Shoot-offs will occur in shooter order and begin with two 3-bird barrages, each from the 26-yard line. The shooter with the best score out of all six birds wins. If ties remain after the first six birds, additional 3-bird barrages will take place from successive yard lines until a winner is declared. Shoot directors and clubs, at their discretion, may elect to utilize a miss and out format after the first six birds in lieu of additional 3-bird barrages. The format must be decided and explained to the shooters before the shoot-off begins.

6.16. International requirements for USHA members shooting overseas. See Appendix I.

## Section 7: Ground Strikes

Low birds and the occasional ground strike are an integral part of the sport. Accordingly, Shoot Committees are encouraged to tune the machines so that these exciting targets are appropriately represented from shoot to shoot.

Referees should pay particular attention to ground strikes. Key elements to

note are the target's flight characteristics, distance traveled, and flight time before and after impact. Equally important, the referee must judge how much time a shooter had to fire one or both barrels in relation to the elements described above.

**7.1. Flight Characteristics.** If the helice strikes or remains in light contact with the ground and continues flying without a noticeable change in speed or abrupt deflection in direction to one side or the other, it is a fair target. If the ground strike results in such change as mentioned above, the referee must determine if the shooter had enough time for two normal or reasonable shots.

a. If the referee decides the shooter had enough time for two normal shots, the result stands, either "Dead" or "Lost."

b. If the referee decides the shooter did not have enough time for two normal shots, it is a "No Bird."

c. A target that hits the ground immediately and does not fly is a "No Bird." If the competitor separates the cap from the helice immediately before a ground strike, the "tie goes to the shooter," and the target is recorded as "Dead."

**7.2. Shooter response time.**

a. Quick shooters. In any ground strike scenario, referees should not penalize fast shooters if a lightning-quick attempt was made and missed—this is especially the case when the Referee believes the target did not provide enough time for the shooter to shoot two normal shots. A "NO BIRD" is the correct call.

**7.3. In those instances where the shooter's first shot drives a target into the ground:**

a. If the referee deems that the shooter had sufficient time for a second shot, the result shall stand.

b. If the first shot drives the target into the ground and the referee determines there was not sufficient time for a second shot, the referee declares a "Bird Again" and the competitor repeats the target but must shoot the first cartridge in a safe direction and above the machines and break the helice with the second cartridge. If the competitor misses on the second shot

or breaks the helice with the first cartridge, then the referee will record "LOST."

7.4. If a ground strike, cap separation, and gun report occur simultaneously, the referee must judge if the shot string was near enough the ground strike to bring about separation. If so, the tie goes to the shooter and the bird is to be considered "DEAD."

## Section 8: Sanctioned Event Host Responsibilities

8.1. Shoot hosts shall conduct their USHA sanctioned event in accordance with the rules and directives defined herein.

8.2. Hosts will appoint a Shoot Director. The Shoot Director should be knowledgeable in all aspects of the game and its governing rules. Shoot Directors will act as the head referee and/or appoint a panel to do so, coordinate the appointment of ring referees, establish Shoot and Protest Committees, and assist the host to bring about a safe, efficient, and rules-compliant shooting event.

8.3. Referees have the following responsibilities:

- Confirm that the correct shooter is shooting
- Enforce the rules for absent shooters
- Record the results of each shot accurately
- Sound the "LOST" target buzzer on all missed targets
- Ensure calls are heard by both shooter and gallery alike.
- Conform to the protest procedures outlined in 6.13 above at such time that they are lodged.
- Adjudicate 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> Barrel Malfunctions
- Adjudicate "NO BIRDS"
- Ensure shooters are not disturbed
- Ensure that all shooters safely handle all firearms.

8.4. The Shoot Committee will be composed of two or more shooters in addition to the Shoot Director. This committee should be varied at each shoot. Their primary task is to adjust/tune the machines prior to each day's race and in between cranks when necessary. At no time should a shooter not on the committee attempt to adjust a machine or its controller without prior authorization from the venue operator, Shoot Director, etc. Adjusting

machines between the cranks is not a decision to be taken lightly. These adjustments should occur infrequently and only after consideration of all possible impacts and the shoot committee determines that the change is necessary and the potential impact for all shooters is as equal as possible.

8.5. When using manually-loaded machines, event hosts will ensure that "NO BIRDS" are re-loaded when:

- a. A machine or target malfunctions on the first bird of a given crank.
- b. It is necessary to keep at least three machines in play (following multiple "NO BIRDS", for instance) for each target needed to complete the crank.

8.6. When using auto-loading machines, event hosts will not swap out a machine until AFTER the shooter has completed his or her crank. However, machines may be turned off mid crank to avoid possible damage to them and to dissipate additional distraction to the shooter.

8.7. Event hosts will not charge shooters for "NO BIRDS" resulting from machine or target malfunctions.

8.8. Event hosts will conform to the Ring Layout dimensions addressed in Part II Section 1 of this document (see diagrams also).

8.9. Mandatory or compulsory purses are prohibited at USHA-sanctioned events.

8.10. A "Missed Target" buzzer or noisemaker, operated by the scorekeeper, is required for each ring in use. These devices are necessary to alert both the shooter and fellow competitors alike how the shot was scored.

8.11. Event hosts will collect and submit to the USHA any applicable Association fees and event scores in a timely manner. A template is available from USHA.

8.12. Event hosts will submit to the USHA the complete scores for each sanctioned event in a timely manner.

## Section 9: USHA Responsibilities

9.1. The USHA will make these rules available in a manner accessible to all members. Further, the USHA will conduct an annual review of these rules

seeking input from current members.

9.2. In the event that a shooter lodges a written grievance, the USHA Board of Directors shall adjudicate the matter and respond via written correspondence within a reasonable timeframe.

## PART II Section 1: Helice Ring Layout

1.1. When practical, Helice rings should be located upon a level field.

1.2. The general direction of the shooting should be North or North East with the axis going through the Shooting Stand and the center machine.

1.3. Five (5) Machine Set-Up. Position machines such that they are evenly spaced a minimum of 4.50 meters and a maximum of 5 meters apart. See layout depicted below.

1.4. Seven (7) Machine Set-Up. Position machines such that they are evenly spaced 3.3 meters apart. See layout depicted below.

1.5. Fence Set-Up. Enclose the perimeter of the ring with a fence measuring two feet in height (see also 1.6 below). Size the fence mesh appropriately to prevent the witness caps from passing through. The distance from the fence to specific machines should be 21m (refer to diagram). If utilizing a pigeon ring, the distance between the machines and the fence may be slightly less than 21m.

1.6. The shooting stand surface, machine bases, and the reference point from which the 24-inch fence height is measured should lie on the same plane.

1.7. Diagrams for both a 5 box and 7 box Helice Ring are contained in Appendix II below.

## Section 2: Target Description / Specifications

2.1. The USHA has adopted FITASC target specifications in their entirety. These specifications may be found within FITASC's most currently published rules and regulations.

## Appendix I: International Requirements

The USHA excluded certain FITASC rulings from their Rules and Regulations re-write of 2020. Accordingly, any USHA member scheduled to compete at a Continental or World FITASC event should familiarize themselves with these differences (found within International Rules Helices 01/01/2020). They are summarized as follows:

1.2.2. FITASC has ruled that shooters will have 20 seconds to complete each shot. This timing is facilitated by a light on the microphone. After 12 seconds, a flashing light will signal that 8 more seconds remain. If the shooter does not fire within the 20 seconds allotted, the machines will cut off and he or she will lose that bird. See also FITASC rule sections 6.5 and 6.6 for additional details on this new requirement.

2.4. USHA sanctioned shoots incorporate 5 bird cranks. FITASC, on the other hand, has their jury determine how many birds will be shot in a given crank, for each event (Grand Prix, Championship, etc.). For 5 box set-ups, this number is between 1 and 4 targets.

2.5. Test firing your gun from the shooting stand prior to a given crank is prohibited.

2.7. All FITASC shooters are required to wear a bib displaying their competitor number prior to the first crank of the first day of competition.

2.8-2.9.1. These sections dictate how shoot-offs will occur and in what order. They cover the Grand Prix, Continental Championship, and World Championship. As a reminder, only those participating in these championships may be a member of their National Teams competing in the Match of Nations. There are no shoot-offs between National teams.

4.1. FITASC prohibits certain types of clothing/foot ware. These are summarized as follows:

- Open toed or open heeled shoes, sandals, or any other similar foot ware is prohibited.
- Shorts and skirts with more than 15cm (5.9") between hem and the center of the kneecap are prohibited.

- Shirts, t-shirts, and similar garments with sleeves less than 10cm (3.93") in length or without sleeves are prohibited.
- Bibs will be placed on the back between shoulders and waist and must be visible at all times.
- Any breach of these rules will warrant yellow cards.
- **"At the closing ceremony, all the awarded shooters shall attend the prize giving, either in the attire of their National Team, or wearing pressed trousers & blazer or a National Training suit/T-shirt.**

4.1.2. Hearing protection is required at all FITASC events.

4.1.3. Eye protection is required at all FITASC events.

4.2. Shotguns:

- Pump shotguns are prohibited.
- Release triggers are authorized provided the shooter notify the referee prior to taking the stand.
- Straps and slings are prohibited.
- Changing a gun or choke mid-crank is prohibited.

4.5. Competitors may only move the microphone laterally. Moving it forwards or backwards will result in a Yellow Card.

4.5. Gun cams or electronic aiming devices are prohibited.

6.4. Those who are late and miss their turn at a FITASC shoot will lose each bird in that crank at the precise moment when the succeeding shooter takes the stand.

6.5. FITASC referees will push the microphone button (which spins up the machines) on your behalf, irrespective of whether you are shooting over a manual or auto-loading set-up.

6.10 g). "The athlete's foot position is violated the line of 26 mt. and the athlete has been warned once already (Second Yellow Card)." Don't step over their line.

6.14. "Yellow card" procedures. FITASC referees may issue warnings for various infractions. After two warnings the afflicted shooter will lose a bird for each warning thereafter. Here's how it works: after a 3<sup>rd</sup> warning is issued, the shooter will be afforded another target. If hit, the "zero for deduction" point will take place then and there. If missed, the deduction "will be applied to the next target declared as "GOOD"," be it in the current crank or the next.

Not written but worth consideration: chew spitting while on the shooting stand, in any quantity, is ill advised and will most likely warrant a yellow card.

Also not mentioned are the traditional flag exchanges between participants. Those traveling are encouraged to ask experienced US competitors about this tradition so as not to show up emptyhanded.

# Appendix II: Ring Dimension Diagrams

## USHA HELICE RING 5-Box Layout

Fence height: 24 inches



