

PROTECT OUR WILD ANIMALS

THE MYTH OF “ACCIDENTAL”
FOXHUNTING



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SUMMARY

- **This paper outlines the basic practices employed in traditional foxhunting to find, flush out and chase foxes.**
- **It also explains how unlikely it would be for a fox to move around in any part of the vicinity of a pack of “trail” hunting hounds, rather than remain safely concealed in cover. Deliberate pressure would have to be brought to bear upon him, as in traditional foxhunting.**
- **The situation in respect of current hunt practices needs to be set against the background that in the run-up to the Parliamentary ban, hunts all over England and Wales invited the media to witness ‘40,000’ hunt members and supporters signing a Declaration that they would defy any ban on hunting.**
- **Thus it is our contention that the “accidents” so frequently claimed by foxhunts - indeed relied upon by them as the all-purpose excuse when they are caught hunting foxes - should be viewed as calculated contraventions of the Hunting Act.**

Introduction

Since the **Hunting Act** came into force there has undoubtedly been widespread, orchestrated and deliberate breaking of the law by foxhunts. They have quickly realised that they can continue to hunt foxes under the cloak of so-called “**trail hunting**”. In the opinion of experienced hunt monitors around the country, trail hunting is a fiction, and merely a front for illegal foxhunting.

This is not just the opinion of hunt monitors. The situation was made clear by an article which appeared on 20th November 2006 in the **Independent** newspaper, which exposed the high level of lawbreaking that is taking place. Their reporter accompanied one Welsh Hunt whose members openly ridiculed the law, and broke it all day by hunting and killing foxes. The reporter wrote:

“Last week, The Independent was invited to follow a typical hunt in a remote corner of Wales. It killed nine foxes, almost all by illegal methods.....”

Masters of three other hunts, identified by their first names only, also said that hunts were continually breaking the law. One, “Henry” a Master of Fox Hounds in the West Country, said:

“95 per cent are breaking the law big time.”

This confirmed the experience of hunt monitors who repeatedly see and film what they believe is illegal foxhunting taking place.

Scores of reported incidents of illegal hunting have not resulted in prosecution, and this situation has reinforced the hunters’ belief that they are above the law.

Time after time, foxhunts only have to claim an “accident” for the case to be dropped.

We hope that this paper will help prosecuting authorities to understand the nature of foxhunting, and therefore to also understand that the foxhunters’ claims of “accidents” are misleading and mendacious.

Note: This paper is restricted to matters concerning main season foxhunting, and the issue of cub hunting is not included herein.

THE MYTH OF “ACCIDENTAL” FOXHUNTING

The truth is that foxhunting is a very contrived activity.

To set a fox running, a considerable amount of effort has to be put in by the hunt staff, both before and during the hunt. In order for foxes to be found and chased by hounds, the following techniques are used:

- All holes, fox earths and dens are “stopped up” - i.e. blocked - by the hunt **earth-stoppers** before the hunt begins so that the foxes are kept above ground and can be found and chased. This often happens the night before the hunt so that foxes that are out foraging at night cannot go below ground and will be more easily found. Alternatively, the terriermen will block up the holes in the early morning before the hunt begins, using their terriers to flush out any foxes within these holes before they are blocked. (*see Quotes: 1a, 2h & 3a*).

(The Hunting Act removed the hunters’ exemption under the Badger Act which allowed them to soft block badger setts. They did this to prevent foxes finding refuge in setts. Anti hunt organisations have found evidence that this practice is still continuing post ban.)

- When the hunt begins, the pack of hounds are taken by the hunts officials into a **covert**. The definition of “covert” given in the Jorrocks Glossary of Hunting Terms (<http://www.jorrocks.com/>) is: *“any stretch of growth where a fox resides; usually a coppice, a stretch of gorse, or a wood.”*
- The hounds will then **draw** the covert, i.e. seek foxes, with the Huntsman encouraging them with voice and hunting horn. Finding a fox and flushing him out of the covert can take some time. (*See Quotes: 1b, 1c, 2a, 2c, 2e, 4a, 5a, 6a & 6b.*)
- When the fox has broken cover and bolted, hunt followers may alert the **Huntsman** (i.e. the person in charge of the hounds, and the one with the hunting horn) and indicate the direction the fox has taken, by shouting, pointing, and if a mounted huntsman, holding up the riding hat with an extended arm.
- Various shouts can be employed to indicate a sighting of the fox. These include, *inter alia*:
 - **Tally ho** (*I have seen the fox*)
 - **Tally ho back** (*fox has run out the covert and back in again*)
 - **Gone over** (*fox has crossed the path, ride or road*)
 - **Holloa/holler** (*a high pitched shriek - means fox has been seen-see Quotes: 7a*).
- Followers, both mounted and those watching from the roads, will continue to provide **information** to the Huntsman about where the hunted fox has run. (*See Quotes: 2b, 2g*).
- The hounds are led from covert to covert during the hunting day. The Huntsman will also take them along **hedges**, where they will seek foxes. (Foxes often lie-up during the day under thick hedges). This is another technique for finding a fox to hunt. (*See Quotes: 2d & 2f.*)

- **Terriermen**, (who are still out at foxhunts, complete with terriers, just as before the Act came into force) use their terriers to bolt foxes out of any unblocked refuge that they may find mid-chase so that they can be hunted on. (*see Quotes: 6c, 6d*). If a fox does run into such a refuge, the hounds will **mark to earth**. i.e. stand baying at the entrance to the refuge. This alerts the human participants to what has happened.
- The **hunting horn** is used by the Huntsman to instruct and encourage the hounds, using different sounds to mean different commands, e.g. rapid repeated single notes mean “hunt on” - i.e. this encourages the hounds to respond to the scent and hunt the fox.
- The **Whipper-in** carries a long whip, and will assist the Huntsman in the control and direction of the hounds.

QUOTES FROM HUNT MAGAZINES (pre-ban)

NB: Any hunts referred to in these quotes took place prior to the ban

1. The Heythrop Hack, magazine of the Heythrop Hunt, Spring 2003: From a tribute to a previous Huntsman:

- a) “It was at the start of their second season at the Cotswold that the decision was made that Charles would... concentrate on stopping [*i.e. stopping up*] and field work with the terriers.
- b) A lot of effort went into covert laying and producing fox friendly places.”
- c) “And then there were the marvellous places such as Addlestrop Hill and Sarsgrove, which acted as fox reservoirs.”

2. Same edition of the Heythrop Hack: From Hunting Reports:

- a) The best day was on 16 February from the meet at Sezincote House.....As usual hounds found [a fox] straight away in the Duckery.”
- b) “....Pressing on above Greenfield Farm where they checked [*i.e. lost the scent*] in some sheep, some good information soon had them running
- c) “Drawing Debdene Bank where there were at least 3 brace of foxes, with one going away [*i.e. bolting from the covert*]
- d) Another good day..... we met at ...Hill Farm on 6th March.we drew Icomb Cowpastures blank, but found [a fox] in thick hedge....”
- e) Hawkhill, which was well foxed - no less than three - was our first draw. One

went away, pursued by hounds.....”

f) After changing horses we found [a fox] in a thick hedge on Pebbly Hill Farm....”

g) Hounds checked at Harford Farm, , some good information that the fox had gone to Waddenhams soon had the hounds runningto a kill just short of Bourton on the Water...

h) Many thanks to our new terrierman...and his team of Earth Stoppers who have done an excellent job to ensure that the hunting has been good.

3. The Heythrop Hack, Spring 2000 - Hunting Reports:

a) ...A move was made to Chastleton where they found [a fox] at Harcombe, running towards Tom Holt's covert, where the fox tried some well stopped earths....

4. The Heythrop Hack, Spring 2001 - Hunting Reports:

a) Finding at least 2 brace of foxes in their superb covert, Crab Orchard.....

b) An inspired cast by the Huntsman soon had hounds running

5. The Heythrop Hack, Christmas 1999 - Hunting Reports:

a) The Opening Meet.....Hounds found numerous foxes in Crab Orchard Covert.....

6. The Vale of Aylesbury Hunt Magazine, Spring 2003 - Hunt Reports:

a) 9th November... The afternoon fox was found in Moors Copse at Harts Land and he was soon away at the south end.....

b) 7th December.....Finding [a fox] in Hammonds Wood.....

c) Thursday 13th.....A fox was bolted from a barn of bales

d) Christmas Eve....a fox was bolted out of of the straw bales and ran down across the farm....

e) New Year's Day meet.....It rained very hard so hard work to find our foxes.....

f)...hounds chopped a fox in Copcourt Courts.....

g) Widmere Farm on the 21st.....with not a great scent hounds hunted slowly.....

h) On the 28thvery heavy rain throughout the rest of the day washed away any scent.....

7. The Heythrop Hack, Spring 2005 - Hunting Reports (prior to 18 Feb.)

a) ...pressing on hard to Sezincote House where they checked [*i.e. lost the scent*] in farm buildings. A holloa by Popes Hole soon had them running again but then some false information caused a long check. Luckily there was a timely holloa by Gary who saw the fox running up the side of the Longborough Fosseway road.....

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HUNT HORROR ON HALLOWE'EN
Somerset County Gazette 2.11.06

SHOCKED parents watched in horror as hunt dogs, one dripping with blood, rampaged through gardens near Taunton during a children's Hallowe'en event on Tuesday. The dogs stormed through the gardens shortly after a terrified foxThe Hunt Master said: "**We were hunting in the area and unfortunately the hounds were trail hunting and picked up the scent of the fox and took off after it.**"

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The Huntsman and Whipper-in lead hounds to a covert

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POLICE PROBE HOUNDS IN GARDENS CLAIM
Western Gazette 22.2.07

*Police are investigating claims a pack of hounds ran through people's gardens ... on Tuesday and killed a fox. Police were called to the Bath Road area shortly after 4pm and found the dead fox in the garden of a property.An unnamed man said residents had been horrified to see the hounds cross the river and race through people's gardens. "There were about 30 dogs which were running loose, and cats, dogs and children were terrorised," he said.....A spokesman for the Hunt said: "**On Tuesday 20 February [we] were hunting legally using an artificial scent. A trail was laid which the hounds were following but they unfortunately picked up a fox scent.....**"*

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FOX BEHAVIOUR

The traditional practices used by hunts to disturb foxes and force them out into the open should now be considered in the context of how foxes naturally behave.

A factor that will allow hunters to mislead and confuse is that few people have a clear understanding and knowledge of fox behaviour.

Foxes are active at night. They sleep during the day either in earths (i.e. fox holes or dens) or in thick cover, such as gorse, undergrowth, or bramble cover, concealing themselves from sight.

In threatening situations, their preferred option is always to remain hidden. They will resist as long as possible, if they feel frightened, moving from their concealed position.

Foxes will only move around during the day if there is nothing in their vicinity that is disturbing or frightening. Hunts are disturbing and frightening.

Foxes have an acute sense of hearing and will hear the hunt approaching from a long way away. If they are not already concealed they will quickly hide themselves away and keep hidden.

Foxes, like all wild animals, have a 'safety' zone - i.e. the area around themselves - which, if invaded, compels them to run away. This explains the foxhunting practice of putting their hounds into coverts, where they persistently investigate all areas as they seek foxes. This puts any fox within the covert in a position where he feels he must bolt from this dangerous and frightening situation. If this happens, the instinct and wish of the fox would be to re-conceal himself as soon as possible in a nearby hole, e.g. a badger sett.

If prevented from doing this, i.e. as the holes have been stopped, the fox will be forced to keep running away, often trying to keep to ditches and hedges in order to stay concealed as much as possible, as the fox is acutely frightened and aware of the danger.

Foxes are not on a suicide mission to fling themselves before a pack of hounds, and they will simply stay where they are in cover unless specifically put into such fear by the persistent proximity of the hounds as they draw the covert, together with the presence of the huntsman shouting and encouraging the hounds, that they lose their nerve and have to run out of cover.

Law enforcers should consider very carefully the aspect of a hunt entering hounds into a covert constituting intent. A defence of having laid a “trail” through an area where foxes are likely to be found, and the consequent chasing of a fox being claimed an “accident”, should also be regarded with appropriate scepticism.

An accident is not an accident if it has been engineered to happen - it is a deliberate course of action designed to bring about a certain result.

THE 'CHOP'

In foxhunting, when the hounds are drawing, - i.e. searching for a fox - there are occasions when a fox will wait until the hounds are almost upon him before he jumps up and attempts to run.

In these cases, he will be killed quickly, with little or no chase.

This is known as a "Chop", and is deplored because it deprives the hunt of a chase. (*See Quotes: 6f*)

The Jorrocks Glossary of Hunting Terms defines a chop as :

"To kill a fox before it has had time to run from the covert.

Therefore we contend that the only "accidents" likely to happen would result in a "chop". This would still be very unlikely to happen during a genuine trail hunt.

The incident would be over in moments, and would be unlikely to be witnessed and recorded by monitors or others.

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HOUNDS INVADE HOUSING ESTATE - NORTHUMBERLAND **Sunday Sun Newcastle - Hounded by hunt 15.1.06**

Furious residents on an estate dubbed Millionaires' Row, whose neighbours include football star Alan Shearer, have slammed hunt bosses after a pack of hounds chasing a fox rampaged through their gardens...A spokesman for the Hunt said the smell of a fox had diverted the hounds from a laid scent...

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SCENT AND IT'S RELEVANCE TO FOX HUNTING

Foxhounds hunt by scent. They follow with their noses the scent that has been left on the ground by the running fox from the scent glands between the pads of his feet.

The hounds will not begin to chase until they have found and settled on the scent that the fox has laid upon the ground as he broke cover and began to run. This can take several minutes.

Additionally, the fox is initially able to run faster than the hounds, and at first will outrun them. This will not help him, as all the time he is leaving a scent upon the ground, and this is what the hounds are following. The hounds have better stamina, and as the fox tires and slows, the hounds will begin to close the gap between them and the fox.

Therefore the hounds are usually quite some distance behind the fox, until the last few minutes when they close in for the kill It is normal for hounds to be five, ten or even more minutes behind the fox.

It is crucial that law enforcers understand this, as filmed evidence of illegal hunting can be misunderstood if the hounds are not seen closely pursuing the fox, as may be seen on a typical, stylized “chocolate box” image of foxhunting. As foxhounds do not hunt by sight, the distance between them and the fox is unimportant - it is the scent with which they need to keep in touch. Sight is employed by the hounds only at the end of the chase as they close in for the kill.

Scenting conditions vary from day to day, being affected by weather conditions, and by certain types of ground. (*See Quotes: 6e, 6g, 6h*)

When hounds lose the scent of the fox, the Huntsman will often dismount and “**lay the hounds on the line**”, i.e. take them to where he knows - often because a follower has told him - the fox has run. That is, he walks the hounds towards where he thinks they will refind the scent, and sets them back

on the line.

If the Huntsman and/or Whipper-In believes the fox may have taken refuge in thick reeds, brambles etc., he may dismount and repeatedly strike the growth with the whip or riding crop to frighten the fox out so that the hounds can continue to chase him.

Sometimes during a break in the scent, the Huntsman will take the hounds over to where he thinks it likely the fox may have run, and this is called **Casting**. (*see Quotes, 4b*) The Jorrocks Glossary of Hunting Terms defines a "Cast" as: "*The hounds' effort to recover a lost scent; Huntsman casts hounds when he tries to help their efforts*".

NB: Scent trails left by foraging foxes the previous night would be cold by the following day.

GENUINE DRAG HUNTING

There are 14 Drag Hunts* in the UK

The normal pattern of a **genuine drag hunt** is to lay the drag (scent) lines across open country, avoiding the areas such as woodland and bramble cover where wild animals are likely to be. **We have never heard of a genuine drag hunt chasing any wild animal. No known press reports exist of such an incident.**

The scent used in **genuine drag hunting** is an artificial chemical crystal, mixed with water and oil.

No animal based scent is allowed by the Master of Draghounds Association.

Foxhunts now claim to be 'trail' hunting. They have stated that they use "fox based scent" - i.e. either the juices from a boiled fox carcass, or fox urine (imported from US fur farms), laying the scent through traditional coverts - places they know are likely to hold foxes.

Thus, even if they are genuinely laying a trail :

a) because it is fox-based, and

b) because it is laid in areas traditionally used to find foxes

the chances of the hounds continuing to find and chase foxes are virtually guaranteed - **not** accidental.

*There are a similar number of bloodhound packs, where a human runner is the "quarry".

.....
FOX KILLED BY HOUNDS ON NATIONAL TRUST LAND -
CUMBRIA
Whitehaven News 16.2.06

*A YEAR on from the introduction of the fox hunting ban, anti-hunt campaigners are calling for all Cumbrian fox hunts to be banned from National Trust land after a fox was killed on Saturday on trust land. **The hunt has said the fox suddenly appeared in the midst of a legal drag trail.***

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ARTIFICIAL EARTHS

Artificial earths have been constructed by hunts for a very long time. Inside a piece of woodland owned or used by the hunt, an underground chamber is excavated, with pipes leading from the chamber to the surface.

The purpose of artificial earths is to attract foxes into hunting areas, and they have also been used to hold foxes within in order to release them for the hounds.

The following reference is made to the use of artificial earths in the 1883 hunting book ‘The Out-of-Door Life of the Rev. John Russell’, and is one of the first known references:

“Foxes, however, and only foxes, were the sole object and with a view to cultivate and increase their number.....Mr Harris set to work to construct artificial earths in three of their coverts on the Hayne Estate; the plan for which had been given him by Mr Paul Ourry Treby, of Goodamoor, one of the best friends to foxhunting the Dartmoor country ever knew.

“When a fox was wanted, the spring plate was unpadlocked; and the upper entrances being stopped, each with a strong gorse faggot, the moment he entered, the plate tripped up behind him, and there he was safe and ready for the coming event.....the keeper, at a given signal, ungorsed the upper entrances just before the hounds came up, then put in a terrier at the lower end, and away.”

In the 1980 book ‘Foxhunting’, by Hunt Master the Duke of Beaufort, the author says:

“In hunting countries where earths are scarce, it is sometimes found necessary to make artificial earths to provide somewhere for local foxes and their cubs.”

Anti hunt organisations have extensive photographic evidence of numerous artificial earths in coverts used by hunts..

In 1995 a new artificial earth was discovered under construction in a hunt wood in Oxfordshire, and the discovery was made public in the local media. On **BBC Radio Oxford on 28th November 1995**, the

interviewer ended an interview with the Hunt Master concerned with the question:

“So, it seems to me that what you are doing is, you’re actually creating prey for you to hunt?”

To which the Hunt Master replied :

“I think the same thing can be said of stocking a trout stream, can’t it?”

Many coverts still used by hunts contain artificial earths. As these are designed to attract foxes, it cannot be any surprise to hunts if their hounds find a fox within such a covert.

Summary and Conclusion

- **This paper has outlined the basic practices employed in foxhunting to find, flush out and chase foxes.**
- **It has also explained how unlikely it would be for a fox to move around in any part of the vicinity of a pack of “trail” hunting hounds, rather than remain safely concealed in cover. Continued and deliberate pressure would have to be brought to bear upon him, as in traditional foxhunting.**
- **It is essential to note that not only are foxhunts continuing to enter their hounds into coverts throughout the hunting day, they are entering their hounds into the same coverts they have always used on any given day and in any given piece of land upon which they are hunting. These coverts are the places where they have traditionally gone to find foxes. Indeed many will contain artificial earths, designed to attract foxes.**
- **Furthermore, the hunt officials and hounds will often spend 20 minutes or even longer in a covert.**
- **Hunt monitors have found evidence that stopping up is still taking place as before the ban.**
- **The situation in respect of current hunt practices needs to be set against the background that in the run-up to the parliamentary ban, hunts all over England and Wales invited the media to witness '40,000' hunt members and supporters signing a declaration that they would defy any ban on hunting.**
- **Thus we contend that the “accidents” so frequently claimed by foxhunts - relied upon by them as the all-purpose excuse when they are caught hunting foxes - should be viewed as calculated contraventions of the Hunting Act.**



Artificial Earths



Terrierman with passenger and terriers



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