

The MFHA Foundation Presents

# Introduction to Foxhunting



4th Edition

Written by Lt. Col. Dennis J. Foster  
Cover Photo by Richard Clay

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# Preface

“It is the union of man and animal in the beauty of nature’s setting. Mounted men and women are privileged to follow and watch this timeless drama of hunter and hunted. The fox or coyote maneuvers, circles, runs and dodges, trying cunningly to escape the pack. The hounds pursue across plains or through woods, over fields or across creeks, into marshes and over rock walls and fences. All the while, the music of hounds in full cry and the stirring call of the horn echoes through the chase. It’s a crescendo of sounds and sights that thrills you beyond imagination.

“Foxhunting is the grand opera of hunting. Mother Nature is the stage manager; baying hounds and hunting horns are the orchestra; pack and prey are the actors. Huntsmen and horses—in front-row seats—make up the



*Dennis J. Foster, Executive Director of the MFHA*

audience. As they watch, the plot gradually plays out before them until the prey at last is lost, accounted for or goes to ground. Every performance is unique; no show is ever repeated.

“Foxhunting provides those fleeting moments of total abandonment—of wind-in-your-hair, bugs-in-your-teeth kind of living. At its best, it is totally out of control. Hounds are screaming, hooves are thundering, the horn is blasting as you race and jump across country to die for, often in weather not fit for man or beast. It is the original extreme sport and the sport of country people from every generation since the beginning of time.” (Excerpt from the book “Whipper-in”, by *Dennis J. Foster*)

The above describes why some of us have spent much of (often the better part of) our lives following hounds on horseback, and it’s a fitting and moving way to embark on our exploration of the sport of foxhunting.

## History

Foxhunting has existed in North America since Colonial days and was enjoyed extensively by night hunters, farmers and landed gentry. The earliest record of the importation of hounds to this country was on June 30, 1650, when Robert Brooke arrived in Maryland with his family and hounds. By the early 1700s, foxhunting was growing in Maryland, Virginia and the other Mid-Atlantic colonies. The earliest surviving record of American foxhunting in the modern manner, by what is now known as an organized hunt, maintained for the benefit of a group of foxhunters rather than for a single owner, is for the pack instituted by Thomas, Sixth Lord Fairfax, in

1747 in northern Virginia. The Blue Ridge Hunt today hunts over much of his former territory. Much of what little is recorded about early hunting comes from letters written by Lord Fairfax and the diaries of George Washington. Washington, the first president of the United States, was an ardent foxhunter who owned his own pack of hounds.

Washington's diaries are laced with frequent references to foxhunts near the nation's capital. On one occasion while congress was in session, hounds ran near the capital. Many congressmen ran outside to watch hounds and some jumped on their horses and joined the chase. The earliest established foxhound club was the Montreal Hunt in Canada, 1826. In the United States, the Piedmont Foxhounds were established in Virginia in 1840. Both packs continue very successfully to this day.

Through the years, North American foxhunting has developed its own distinct flavor that is noticeably different from British foxhunting. The most obvious difference is that in North America the emphasis is on the chase rather than the kill. In addition, a large number of hunts chase the coyote, rather than the fox. The coyote population has increased by large numbers throughout the United States and Canada. It is bigger, stronger and faster than a fox. In Britain the goal is to kill the fox. Because there is no rabies in the British Isles, the fox population is extremely high and fox are considered vermin. Farmers who keep sheep want the fox population controlled. In America, this is not normally the case. A successful hunt ends when the fox is accounted for by entering a hole in the ground, called an "earth." Once

there, hounds are rewarded with praise from their huntsman. The fox gets away and is chased another day. When hounds do not account for a fox by chasing him to an earth, the vast majority of times hounds lose the scent of the fox and that ends the hunt. On many hunts scent isn't sufficient for hounds to run at all. They cannot run what they can't smell. Even these slow days are fun as the scenery is always beautiful, fellow foxhunters enjoy the camaraderie of watching the hounds as they attempt to find the quarry. That is not to say that foxhounds in America do not sometimes kill, but it is always the exception. Fox populations in hunt country are exceptionally healthy due to natural selection.

The generic term foxhunting applies to red fox, grey fox, coyote and bobcat and in some hunts the wild pig or boar. In colonial days the primary quarry was the grey fox mostly in the southern states. It is believed that the red fox migrated to the southern states from the North and others were imported from England and released. What animal is hunted depends on the geographic location of the hunt. Coyotes are very adaptable and have migrated across America and Canada reaching areas that were once red fox territories in Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania.

In some parts of North America and Canada, coyotes have become a nuisance and are destroying livestock. In those situations hunts do attempt to kill the coyote with limited success. There is some evidence that in areas where hounds hunt coyote on a regular basis, they tend to avoid the area or move. Like the coyote, wild boar populations have exploded in the America's

southern and western states with devastating damage to the lands they inhabit. Pressure to cull them is strong from both farmers and wildlife officials. Wild boars go to bay and are humanely dispatched by the huntsman.

There is tremendous variety of both terrain and quarry in the United States and Canada. Hounds hunt red fox along the sand dunes of Long Island Sound. They hunt red and grey foxes, coyotes and bobcats in the pine woods of Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, Kentucky, Mississippi, Florida and the Carolinas. The stony fields and thick deciduous growth of New England make perfect covert for the red fox. Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Delaware offer countryside closer to the traditional English landscape. Here, the fox is plentiful. Moving westward, there is hunting on the great plains of the Midwest, in the high altitudes of the Rocky Mountains and along the shores of the Pacific Ocean. Coyotes predominate as one moves westward. Wild boar or wild pigs are hunted by some hunts in Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, Carolinas, Texas, Arkansas, and California. Canada has the same variety of terrain and quarry as one travels from east to west. Foxhunting exists in thirty-seven states and five Canadian provinces.



# Quarry



Red Fox



Red Fox



Coyote



Coyote



Boar



Bobcat



Grey Fox



Grey Fox

## Who We Are: The MFHA in Action

An old adage says, “Some people ride to hunt, others hunt to ride.” And in the 21st century, it’s truer than ever.

Certainly the thrill of galloping over the countryside on a fine horse who meets his fences well is a thrill for anyone, and the sight of a pack of hounds in full cry is breathtaking. But today’s hunters have a special reward: permission to ride over the private and public lands that still constitute open spaces. No group of individuals is more aware of this privilege, and no group

is more outspoken in their desire to protect the quarry and preserve their environment than foxhunters.



*Laura Pitts showing Potomac Judo at the 2011 Virginia Hound Show. Photo by Janet Hitchen.*

The Masters of Foxhounds Association is a nonprofit corporation formed to improve the breeding of foxhounds, to encourage foxhunting, to approve and register territories on official maps of foxhunting countries, to settle disputes in regard to those countries, to encourage performance trials (where hounds from various hunts are put together and judged for their hunting ability), to conduct foxhound

conformation shows, and to set and maintain high sporting standards among its membership. As of January 2012, there were 166 organized clubs with about 20,000 followers.

To become an MFHA member, a hunt must have the necessary number of qualified hounds, proper kennel facilities for them, a hunt country that does not conflict with another hunt, an established organization, and it must maintain the standards and guidelines (which include animal care and good sportsmanship) directed by the MFHA, and be actively hunting hounds. The MFHA's leaders encourage membership as the best way to keep up the high sporting standards they insist upon.



*A foxhound performance trial is a competition, usually over a two-day period, in which the competing hunts enter their best hounds.*

The MFHA promulgates rules and standards in order to organize and supervise the conduct of the sport. Since

American foxhunting doesn't have the agricultural imperative to control the fox population through killing (as in Great Britain), we emphasize the thrill of the chase in a natural setting. To ensure that the sport is conducted with respect for its quarry, the MFHA publishes a booklet entitled *The Code of*

*Hunting Practices*, which emphasizes that foxes and coyotes must be hunted in their wild and natural state. Any other practice that does not give an animal a sporting chance is contrary to the best traditions of the sport and is strictly forbidden. All hunts in both the United States and Canada that are MFHA members must follow this code or lose their membership. The MFHA enforces the code by monitoring and inspecting hunts.

The MFHA is a leader in land conservation and preservation of wildlife habitat. Its member hunts have saved over a million acres in conservation easements. This has resulted in not only open space for hunting, but supports other field sports that require country settings.

The MFHA promotes animal welfare and devotes considerable time exposing the animal rights movement's hypocrisy, which has a goal to stop all hunting in America and a bottom line of a petless and meatless society. Through distortions of the truth and hidden agendas, they confuse the media and public and appeal to emotions at the expense of animal welfare. The MFHA promotes animal welfare with a



*For generations the world has grown up watching Disney movies depicting animals as humans that talk, feel and think human. This distorts the true relationships between humans to animals and animals to animals. As our growing urban societies get further away from nature's realities, the need to educate children and adults on the realities of nature and differences between wild and domestic animals is essential to our future.*

philosophy that people eat and wear animals, while living with and loving animals. The MFHA's members believe that animals are good for us, both physically and mentally. The Association and its member hunts maintain the highest standards for the care of hounds and horses. The MFHA requires member hunts treat the quarry humanely while adhering to fair sporting practices and its code of conduct.

## Foxhunting 101

A hunt can be organized in several different ways. It may be a *private pack*, owned and supported by an individual who pays all the bills and invites whomever he or she wants to join. It can be a *subscription pack*, where members pay a fee to hunt and a club or a hunt committee owns the hounds. Or it can be a *membership pack*, where the members own the hunt and elect



*Green Spring Valley Hounds.*

the Masters and officers. In a subscription pack, the Masters run the hunt, and they invite people to hunt. The invited followers pay a subscription but have no say about how the hunt is run, although the Masters may appoint committees to help run the hunt. A membership hunt usually elects its Masters and officers or has elected committees that perform various

functions, such as appointing Masters or officers. These Masters serve for designated periods and are responsible to the members or a hunt committee.

The vast majority of American hunts are subscription or membership packs, and their organization is similar to many golf clubs. Individuals pay a fee to be members and/or hunt. This money is used to feed and care for hounds and for other hunt-associated expenses.

In all types of hunts, it's the *Master* who is responsible for the day's sport and makes the decisions. The Master calls upon the owners over whose property the hunt rides. They supervise the hound breeding program, schedule the hunt meet locations and appoint the hunt staff members who work for them. If they do not hunt the hounds themselves,

they appoint a huntsman, who is sometimes a paid professional. Most hunts have more than one Master to share these responsibilities. No matter what the arrangement, all of a hunt's Masters are always treated with the utmost respect and courtesy. They have absolute authority over the day's hunting.

The *huntsman*, who may or may not be a Master, is the key to good sport, so the actual hunting revolves around him or her. They're responsible for the day's hunting. Huntsmen care for, train and hunt the pack of hounds, whose



*Mr. Stewart's Cheshire Foxhounds is one of the oldest, most efficient kennels ever built. It is hound friendly, built to maximize the care and health of hounds, easy to keep clean and beautiful.*

names, traits and voices they know completely. The hounds respond to the huntsman's horn, voice and both mounted and unmounted body position.

It's important to always give the huntsman, hounds and staff the right of way immediately. The correct procedure is to say, "Staff, please," or, "Hounds, please," and to immediately move your horse out of the way, making sure your horses' rear end is pointed away from the passing horse or hounds.



A huntsmen's voice is used to hunt hounds and is only for hounds. The huntsman carries a *hunting horn*. This tells both hounds and field members what's going on and where the pack is located. He uses the following calls: "leaving the meet," a

short blast alerting hounds and the field of riders the hunt has begun; "finding the fox" or drawing coverts, usually intermittent short blasts of the horn to let hounds and riders know where he's located; "keeping in touch" short blasts of the horn to let hounds know where their huntsman is located (not used by all huntsmen); "first strike" a short fast doubling of the horn when hounds first strike to encourage the pack to join; "gone away," a series

*Dennis Downing bending the note. The hunting horn allows the huntsman to communicate with his hounds and alerts the field to various different commands. The modern hunting horn is made of copper with nickel bands and mouthpiece. Unique cow horns and military bugles were used in the past giving the hunting horn icon status in the foxhunting world. At foxhound shows around North America, the horn-blowing competition among huntsmen is a thrilling contest with an increasingly larger audience. Photo by Karen Myers of KLM Images.*

of fast rattles of the horn used to excite hounds to join others that have found the fox who's broken from the covert and to tell the field the chase is on; "gone to ground," a long call blown over an earth where the fox has escaped, to excite the hounds and reward them for chasing the fox to ground; "the kill," very similar to gone to ground but a higher pitch with more rattle; "whipper-in call," a note the huntsman uses to bring his whippers-in to him; "riot call," a very sour long note on the horn to indicate hounds are hunting riot and to call them off; "going home," a very long, beautiful call to signify the end of day and to call back any hound still out. All field members should learn the meanings of the hunting calls to enhance their pleasure.

The above calls can be obtained on "The Hunting Horn" audio CD, available for purchase on the MFHA's website at [www.mfha.com](http://www.mfha.com). The CD uses famous huntsmen who demonstrate each call. Melvin Poe demonstrates the cow horn, the first horns used in America. Elizabeth Rose, the American holler. Also on the CD are Benjamin Hardaway, James Young, Johnny Grey, Larry Pitts, Tommy Haney, Paul Luckhurst, Peter Howe, Richard Buswell and Vincent Taraglia.

Huntsmen should be excellent riders and experts about hounds, wild animals, terrain and hunting conditions. When you arrive at the meet, it's not appropriate to greet or talk to the huntsman, unless he or she indicates for you to do so. Their job is their hounds and good sport. If you'd like to meet or talk to him or her, wait until the hunt and hounds are safely put away at day's end.



*Whippers-in* assist the huntsman in hunting the hounds. They're an extension of the huntsman, usually far out on the flanks. They help assure that the hounds do the huntsman's bidding. They act as safety valves to prevent hounds from running onto roads or on to land not open to hunting and to assist the huntsman with myriad tasks related to the hunt. Whippers-in must be bold riders, able to stay up with hounds and, if necessary, get ahead of them. They must know each hound by name and personality and must know the country they cross.



*Huntsman Jody Murtagh with his granddaughter whipping-in. Photo by Janet Fulcher.*



*Mr. Stewart's Cheshire Foxhounds summer walking out - huntsman, Ivan Dowling.*

*Foxhounds* are always referred to as hounds, although a hound is a dog and to correct someone who isn't familiar with the term when they refer to the hound as a dog is bad form. Hounds are wonderful animals. They're sensitive, friendly and happy animals, often great with children.

While they aren't your normal house dog, retired hounds occasionally make good pets. Still, hounds are bred to hunt, and any environment that limits

that can be difficult for them. Hounds are bred for nose (their scenting ability), cry (the sound of their bark), speed and drive (they must cover vast distances, often for many hours), biddability (their willingness to do what's asked of them and to hunt as a pack, rather than as an individual).

A hound must do three things to be a good foxhound. First, he must find the quarry or his scent. Second, he must chase the quarry. And, third, he must account for the quarry. A successful foxhunt usually ends when the fox is accounted for by entering its hole in the ground, called an earth. That's called "gone to ground." Once there, hounds are rewarded with praise from their huntsman to end the chase. If hounds don't account for the fox by chasing him to his earth, the vast majority of times the chase ends when the hounds lose the scent of the fox.

*Accounting for the quarry* is the indication of a good pack of hounds. You account for a fox by either killing it or by putting it to ground or, with a coyote, by putting it to bay. Again, the emphasis in North America is to put the fox to ground after a chase since fox are not a problem in most of North America. A fox or coyote that successfully beats hounds to a safe place



*Tommy Haney, huntsman of Mooreland Hunt blowing fox to ground. Photo by Dennis Foster.*

is more likely to be a healthy, hardy specimen. Quarry caught by hounds above ground are more likely to be sickly or hurt, thereby enforcing Mother Nature's rule of survival of the fittest.

To breed a pack of hounds that measures up to the MFHA's standards is no easy task. The MFHA Stud Book keeps track of all hounds bred in the United States and Canada, with four breed classifications: *English, American, Penn-Marydel and Crossbred*. The English hound, as his name implies, is a hound whose ancestors are in the English Foxhound Stud Book. American hounds are bred in America, and some of the best-known varieties are the Bywaters hound, the Walker hound, the July hound and the Penn-Marydel. Due to the Penn-Marydel's overwhelming popularity within hunts in the United States, it was decided to recognize it as a separate breed classification. Crossbred hounds are a cross between English and American hounds. Only in Canada does the English hound predominate. Crossbred hounds are the most popular in the United States.

For a new hunt to be registered and eventually recognized, they must have 12 *couple* (hounds are always counted by twos, hence the word "couple") of entered hounds (hounds that have actually hunted with a recognized pack) for a live hunt or six couple of entered hounds for a drag hunt. (A drag hunt is a hunt that uses a lure of fox or coyote scent. The lure is dragged in a pattern to simulate a live quarry. Hounds follow the scent, and riders follow the hounds.) Most hunts go out with 12 to 18 couple at a time.

The hunt must also have a breeding program and produce their hounds. Their kennels must meet the MFHA qualifications of sanitation and space.

Most hunts welcome visitors to their kennels, but never arrive unannounced. Hunts walk out on foot during the summer, and many encourage their members to come out on hound walks to see the hounds and sometimes help with the walk. Later in the summer, hunts will start walking out on horseback to get hounds and horses acclimated and in condition. Some hunts allow field members to ride behind hounds on these late-summer walks, a good way to introduce green horses to hounds.

Foxhunting has a *formal season* and an *informal season*. The formal season has a formal dress code, and the day's sport generally lasts longer, as the temperature is lower and hounds and horses are fit. The informal season, called *cubhunting* or *autumn hunting*, is when young hounds are introduced into the pack. The autumn hunting or cubbing season allows for less formal attire, called *ratcatcher*. Always check with the hunt secretary



*Performance Trials are a form of field trial that has been modified to find not only the best hounds, but the best packs of hounds. Hounds are numbered and scored with the winners given bragging rights. Great fun for all! Photo by Elizabeth Sher.*

since some hunts in very warm climates do not require coats and may allow polo shirts. Autumn hunting is also the period when horses and hounds are

conditioned and trained, while the quarry learns to evade hounds. Young hounds learn not to run riot, which means chasing anything other than the desired quarry of red fox, gray fox, coyote, bobcat and in some hunts, boar. Riot normally means chasing deer in North America. During autumn hunting season, hounds get used to other farm animals and their environment.

In the past, autumn hunting was by invitation by the Master(s) only. Today it's a normal part of the season for most packs, and a schedule is provided for members. Most hunts have what's called a pre-autumn or pre-cubbing hunting period, where only staff goes out. This is usually in late summer and is very informal. It's to give the staff, hounds and horses an opportunity to get fit and to train without any care for the problems that could be associated with a field of riders following them.

Almost all hunts have a *hunt secretary*, whose job is to help with the many administrative responsibilities. They send notifications to the membership and collect "caps," a fee charged to people who aren't members but wish to hunt for a day. Most hunts only allow three to five caps per individual per season. The hunt secretary normally collects the caps at the meet.

The *Field Master* is the most important person for people riding in the field. The Field Master leads the field, and no riders in the field should ever pass the Field Master during a hunt. The Field Master is usually one of the Joint-

Masters, but he or she can also be a person appointed by the Master as a permanent position or just for the day. Field Masters have absolute control of the riders and their horses. Their job is to keep the field close enough to enjoy



*A first field in full gallop. Photo by Karen Myers of KLM Images.*

watching the hounds hunt the fox or coyote and yet not so close as to interfere with the huntsman. A good Field Master will provide the field with frequent views of hounds as they pursue their quarry. It is the Field Master who disciplines riders for infractions while out hunting. They, along with the Masters, have the authority to dismiss a rider from the field.

*The field* can be any number of riders, but on rare occasions, fields of more than 100 can show up on weekends or special meets. The number of riders allowed to hunt often depends on the occasion and the territory's capability to tolerate large numbers.

Many hunts have a first, second or even a third field, each of which has a Field Master. The *first field* consists of the riders who stay closest to the huntsman and hounds. They stay with hounds as they gallop over all obstacles, through water and all types of terrain. The first field should always consist of experienced riders with safe horses accustomed to hunting.

The *second field* is usually mounted foxhunters who don't want to jump, prefer a slower pace, or have green horses that need to be trained to foxhunt. The second field goes around obstacles or opens gates but tries to stay up with hounds whenever possible. The second field often views more foxes or coyotes, simply because they have more time to observe what's going on around them. A good Field Master will take them to locations where they can see what's going on and yet not interfere with the huntsmen, the hounds or the route of the first field.



*Second field riders walk, trot, and canter, but no jumping. Photo by Karen Myers of KLM Images.*

The *third field* is often called “*hilltoppers*” because they're usually positioned

on hills or places that give them maximum viewing opportunities. This group of mounted followers doesn't jump or gallop. They mostly walk or trot from one location to another and, unlike the second field, they're in no hurry to stay with hounds. Often the group consists of older members, very young children on leadline ponies,



*Hilltoppers mostly walk or trot from one location to another, often positioning themselves on hills or places that give them maximum viewing opportunities of the hunt.*

inexperienced riders, or riders on green horses.

Some hunts have one additional field, called the “*car followers*.” They try to observe the hunt as best they can from their cars, while following on the roads. While this field usually does not have a Field Master, often it should, especially when large numbers of cars are following. Cars lining the roads can obstruct traffic, illegally park and sometimes interfere with hunting.

*The right horse* is essential to your enjoyment and safety. Many horses do not have the right temperament to be safe, good hunters, so finding a horse with the right temperament should be the No. 1 priority. Many first-time hunters never hunt again if they show up on a horse that’s also a first-time hunter. It’s not fun to be riding a mount that’s uncontrollable or dangerous. Green riders riding green horses are usually a recipe for disaster. The time to train a hunting horse is before the season gets under way.

Acquaint your horse with hounds; ask your Master if you can walk out behind hounds during hound walks before the season begins so that there is no pressure to keep up. Even if your horse is good on trails and quiet, don’t just throw him into a hunt without preparation. The most important gait he must learn is whoa or stop. The second and third fields are a good place for horses to learn to hunt.



*A fine horse who meets his fences well is a thrill for anyone, but he must also have good field manners if he is to succeed as a foxhunter. Photo by Jim Meads.*



*A horse that kicks* out at hounds or other horses isn't welcome in the hunting field. Most hunts have a one-incidence tolerance for horses that kick out at hounds. Hounds that get kicked can be ruined for hunting. Horses that kick out at other horses are a danger to everyone, as well. A *red ribbon* on the dock of the horses' tail indicates a horse might kick out, but it doesn't give anyone a free pass if the horse does kick. It's just a warning. Consequently, the importance of keeping a safe distance between horses in the field cannot be overstated. Horses that run up on or into other horses should be asked to leave the hunting field too. Be sensitive to the condition of your horse, especially early in the season or when the going is muddy or otherwise heavy. Be alert for signs of fatigue. If your horse seems fatigued, tell the Field Master you need to withdraw from the field. A green ribbon on a horses' tail indicates you have a green horse. Like the red ribbon, it is not a free pass for misbehavior.

Any hunting day your horse should look its best. During the formal season horses' manes should be braided. Some hunts do not require this at every hunt, but all horses' manes should be pulled short. There should be no full manes unless it is a new foxhunter that is learning. First time riders should be given exceptions in appearance of rider and horse when possible. The best example is a landowner who would like to try it. There are lots of foxhunters who started out as western riders in western saddles. Once they are hooked they'll make the necessary changes pretty quickly. Only a Master can make these types of exceptions or allowances for invited guests who have never fox hunted.

*Tack:* Many of the old rules for hunting still apply, although many do not. Still, the basics don't change: You must have a clean horse and clean tack. Your appearance is important because it reflects on the hunt and its members. High-quality leather pays off in the long run. Frequent inspection of your tack, especially your stirrup leathers, can save you an accident. Don't try to get an extra season out of something that's questionable. Always be sure the safety catches holding the leathers to the saddle tree are open.



In the old days, saddlecloths and pads were not encouraged, but in today's hunting a clean, white saddle pad is the norm. Etiquette should never take precedence over a sore back or safety. Saddle pads should be saddle-shaped and of a light color (white, buff or yellow).

*A lady member in formal attire riding sidesaddle wears a silk top hat with a six-inch crown and a veil. This rider is carrying the traditional sandwich case attached to her saddle. While top hats and bowlers were early tradition they are not safe. Many hunt people love the eloquence and glamour of the old. Wearing the top hat at the beginning of a special meet or stirrup cup could be acceptable, but changing to an approved safety helmet before riding off to begin the actual hunt should be required.*

Bridles should be plain, flat brown leather. Browbands should match the bridle and never be another color or patent leather. A cavesson (noseband) should be used. Bits should be whatever it takes to control the horse. The milder the better, but if a snaffle isn't enough, use a stronger bit. Traditional sewn-in bridles are not convenient; a normal stud attachment is fine.

Saddles should be brown leather. Stirrup irons should be large, workmanlike and clean (shined). Safety equipment, such as cruppers, grazing overchecks



*Hunting gear, which has changed little since foxhunting began, is based on practicality. The boots and heavy breeches protect riders from branches and brambles. The heavy Melton coats are almost waterproof. The stock tie, fastened with a gold stock pin, can substitute for a bandage for man or horse in case of an accident. Reggie Spreadborough, huntsman Orange County. Photo by Janet Hitchen.*

and safety stirrups, should be used whenever advisable, especially for children.

Girths are preferably leather, but clean string and cloth girths are permissible, as are girth covers made of fleece.

Figure-eight and flash nosebands, bell boots and shin boots, gel and cushion saddle pads should be used only when required for the safety or health of the horse. Accessories like fly hoods, ear or muzzle covers are not appropriate in the hunting field.

Sandwich cases or flasks, usually not used together per tradition, are acceptable. There is no reason to not have both if properly secured, but don't let your saddle look like a Christmas tree, with things hanging all over it. A wire cutter in a leather case attached to your saddle is encouraged. Carrying a Leatherman or wire cutting tool on your person is even more effective. If a horse goes down from getting into wire and you are thrown, you won't be able to reach wire cutters on your saddle safely. Having them on your person is better.

Breastplates are optional but recommended in hilly country or if you have a skinny horse on whom the saddle slides back. They should be plain leather and the same color as the rest of your tack. Martingales, if used, should be plain or raised leather. A running martingale must have “stops” on the reins.

## Foxhunting 102

The rules pertaining to foxhunting come from tradition and history. These rules are governed by safety and by respect for wild and domestic animals, nature, good sportsmanship and landowners.

To start, you must first have access to a horse, and you must be a confident enough rider to participate in one of the three fields described. To find the hunt closest to you, check with the MFHA or go to their website ([www.mfha.com](http://www.mfha.com)), where you can also become an MFHA subscribing member for a small fee. The income from this membership helps protect and perpetuate foxhunting for future generations.

Hunts will often invite individuals to hunt for a day; hoping to find those who are able to ride and enjoy the sport and will join them. However, people that wish to hunt that have their own horse and don't know anyone in the hunt can call the hunt secretary or a Master and ask to ride with the hunt.

*Actions at the meet:* You should arrive at least a half hour before the meet begins. You'll need this time to assure you and your horse are properly turned out, pay your capping fee, and be introduced to the Master and Field Master. It's traditional to greet the Master with a "good morning, Master," no matter the time of day. At a minimum a "good day, Master" is appreciated. If you're introduced to the landowner over whose land the hunt will be riding or who is hosting the meet, thank them for their generosity. Do not approach or attempt to speak to hunt staff unless you have permission from the Master. Hunt staff have important duties that require their full attention.

Once you've unloaded your horse, it is NOT the time to clean out your trailer. Manure dropped in the trailer should stay in the trailer. The landowner hosting the meet isn't happy to see your trash or trailer droppings scattered over his land. If the ground is wet, take care to park in a spot that won't make ruts and where you won't get stuck.



*Hounds are bred to hunt, and any environment that limits that can be cruel to them. Blue Ridge Hunt in full cry. Photo by Karen Myers of KLM Images.*

On special occasions, some hunts offer a "stirrup cup" before the meet, usually refreshments or finger food served to you on your horse. Take care to

return the containers to the servers and not leave them on the ground. And take special care that your horse doesn't endanger the people on the ground. Most hunts move out smartly at the designated time, so don't be late for the meet. If you are late, it's not appropriate to try to find the hunt by going across country. Stay on roads and wait for an opportunity to join that will not distract from the hunting. Some hunts have a policy that if you arrive after the field has moved off, you must go home. Check the hunt's policy.

*Actions in the field* If a member has invited you to hunt, you should ride with that member. If you're not a guest of anyone, you should ride in the back of the field unless asked to ride forward. Be careful, though, as many good chases have been ruined by riders lagging too far behind the field, causing the fox or coyote to be turned. A good rule of thumb is to keep about one horse's length between you and the rider in front.



*When hounds are in full cry and go over or cross open country, like a flock of pigeon, it's called "streaming away." When hounds are in "full cry" if they were bunched closely together (not this photo) it is said you can throw a "blanket" over the entire pack. Hypothetically, being able to put a blanket over a pack of hounds in full cry is beautiful to see and hear. It demonstrates they are a level pack, bred to work as one with similar conformation and abilities. It takes years of consistent, careful breeding to reach and keep. It is the ultimate goal of a great pack. Photo by Gil Brown.*

Once the field starts to move out, you should try to remain in the same relative position. If the person in front of you is too slow, it's appropriate to pass them, but be sure to pick a place with plenty of room. When on a hard run, if riders

begin to string out and not keep up with hounds, by all means ride on forward. Always try to stay up with hounds but behind the Field Master.

*Jumping obstacles* enhances the pleasure many people have when hunting. But jumping anything more than what's necessary is called *larking* and is frowned upon. Remember, your horse may well need that energy if the day is long or fast. During the formal season, most hunts stay in the field for three to four hours. And it's not uncommon to have the occasional six-hour hunt. Some of the worst and most preventable accidents have occurred after the hunt, when hounds are coming home and someone decides to take a jump that isn't necessary. If your horse refuses a jump, get out of the way quickly. Move to the back of the line. When approaching a jump, give riders in front of you enough room to be able to stop should their horses refuse or they fall at the jump.

*Leaving the hunt early:* You must stay with the field at all times. Should you have to leave the field before the end of the day, ask permission from the Field Master. He or she will advise you by which route to return to the meet so that you don't interfere with hounds or trespass. Always remember: *Just because the hunt has permission to hunt across a property doesn't mean individuals in the hunt have that same permission.* This includes times when you must leave the hunt while they're still hunting, or you're trying to find the hunt because you were late or left behind, or on nonhunting days.

## Recap: Rules for Field Members

The rules pertaining to foxhunting come from tradition and history. These rules are governed by safety and common sense.

- If you are a guest and capping, seek out the hunt secretary to ensure that you are recorded as being on the hunt and pay your capping fee before the hunt moves out. It is your responsibility to find the secretary, not the secretary's to find you.
- Never leave the field without notifying the Field Master or another person if it's not feasible to talk to the Field Master.
- Never talk to or rate (try to correct) a hound.
- Do not speak to one another when close to hounds. Never speak their names where they can hear you. Anything that brings a hound's head up distracts from their hunting.
- If you carry a hunt whip, keep it coiled in your hand. And don't carry it unless your horse accepts it. If you and your horse are standing as a field member and hounds pass through, dropping your lash will discourage a hound from going near or underneath your horse. Field members never touch a hound with a whip or lash. Ask your Field Master if it is okay to use the technique of hanging your lash in your hunt.



- Never get between a hound and the huntsman.
- Always keep your horse a safe distance from other horses.
- Pay attention to other horses around you and watch hounds. The hunting field is not the place for long conversation.
- Watch out for holes, wire or other hazards. If you see one, use the word "ware" hole or wire or whatever. Speak only loud enough for the person after you to hear. You don't want to disturb hounds hunting.
- Listen for instructions: Gate please, gate open, reverse field, staff please, ware staff, ware hound, hold hard, and stay on the edge of the field or crops. Always point to the potential danger when you give the warning.
- Ladies and Gentlemen should assist each other and children, as necessary, in the conduct of the hunt for convenience and safety.
- If you have a steady horse that will stand when you dismount and you can mount easily, volunteer to open gates.
- Try to learn more about hounds and hound language. It will enhance your pleasure. On a slow day, a good Field Master will often give you pointers on what the various hounds are doing.
- Listen for the huntsman's horn calls. Learn what they mean. Knowing them will prepare you for what is next or what is happening.

- Remember, if you keep quiet and have a well-mannered horse, the Field Master can keep you closer to the huntsman and hounds and you'll see more action.
- If you find a gate open, leave it open; if you have to open a gate, close it behind you.
- Never ride across hunt country on non-hunting days unless you have permission from the landowner.
- Whenever possible when speaking to a landowner, dismount and remove your hat and sun glasses.
- Always volunteer to open gates when appropriate. If someone opens a gate for you, make sure you or someone stays behind with that person. Horses get anxious when left, so it's a good idea to stay and help the person getting the gate.
- Always ride on the edge of fields whenever possible. Never cross seeded areas unless the Field Master leads you. Never jump anything the Field Master does not unless told to take your own line. If the Field Masters goes through a gate with a jump next to it, everyone goes through the gate.
- If you break a jump or do any damage to anything, offer to pay for it and to help fix it. As soon as possible, make sure you inform a Master or the hunt secretary about what happened.

- Whenever riding near livestock slow down and walk if possible. Know the differences between livestock. Herds of horses, cows or sheep react differently if they have young. Young animals act differently than older animals. A field of riders passing near animals in an open field is different if those animals are up against a fence. Even when on a good chase, should you come up on livestock that could become scared or stampede, you must slow down until after the dangerous period has passed.
- Stay off crops and behind the rider in front of you unless told to spread out. When forced to cross a seeded or wet area is the time to spread out and not ride behind another rider. The field master should advise when that is necessary.
- A hunt is not meant to be a trail ride, cross country jumping or nature walk. The focus for everyone needs to be on hounds hunting, the conduct and progress of the hunt. Anything that distracts from hunting is unacceptable. In the hunt field the Master is the final authority and should never be argued with. Save discussions for after the hunt.
- Never “tally-ho” a fox while in the field. If you view the quarry, quietly ride up to the Field Master and tell them where and when you saw it. He or she will decide if it needs to be brought to the huntsman’s attention.
- Should you by mistake pass the Field Master or come off your horse, donating a beverage to the club is traditional in many hunts.

- If you are invited to a breakfast or the after hunt activity in someone's home, take off your spurs before you enter their home. If it has been muddy, remove your boots or clean them thoroughly before entering.
- Be courteous and friendly to the public. A smile or wave of the hand does wonders for the good of our sport. Do not impede traffic while on your horse. Public relations are everyone's responsibility.
- *At the end of the day* it is appropriate to stay in the field until the Master has released the hounds and huntsman for the day. It's then appropriate to thank the huntsman and staff and to leave the field.

## Proper Attire

The formal Hunting Dress below is given for guidance only. Over the years, it has proved to be practical, comfortable and comparatively safe, for which reason it has become traditional. Masters have always had the authority to insist on whatever degree of formality or informality of dress that suits their particular countries. These suggestions reflect decades of tradition and should only be deviated from for significant reasons. *Refer to the MFHA Guidebook for more detail.*

To be awarded colors or the hunt's button is an honor everyone who hunts should strive to obtain. When most hunts award colors, they award the hunt button at the same time, usually at the end of the season. Again it is a hunt's

prerogative as to whom, how and when colors are awarded. To be awarded colors means you are a member of the hunt who has met all the hunt's standards for hunting. The hunt colors are colors the hunt chooses and are put on the collar of their formal hunt coat (also worn on the collar and lapel of men's "scarlets", equivalent to a tuxedo). The color of the coat, red, black or whatever, is specific to individual hunts. In some hunts, only staff (huntsman, whippers-in, Masters, field Masters and hunt secretaries) wear scarlet with the hunt's colors on their collar and the hunt button. Everyone else wears a black coat with the colors on the collar and the hunt button. In many hunts only men wear scarlet with colors and the ladies wear the black or dark blue coats with the hunt color on the collar and hunt button. That is again up to the hunt. The button is usually the hunt's logo, engraved into a brass (for men) or black plastic (for women) button that can only be worn on the formal coat for those awarded colors. Hunt buttons are never put on a black coat without colors unless you are a Master of Hounds.

The criteria to earn colors differs between hunts but is fairly universal: hunting regularly, assisting with affairs of the hunt like work crews or social events, being knowledgeable of hunting etiquette and the territory the hunt hunts over, a proficient safe rider and most importantly (to the MFHA) is anyone awarded colors should not be an embarrassment to their hunt should they hunt with another hunt.

Many hunts use a time consideration where they consider you for colors after one or two years, it should not be automatic since it is your proficiency and

participation that is important. Throughout this guidance and in many other hunting books you will see information and pictures of traditional head wear. Top hats and Bowlers had their place in foxhunting's history and traditions. Today the MFHA recommends only safety approved helmets with chin straps.

When a hunt member with colors is invited or requests to hunt with another hunt, the proper attire is always a plain black coat without colors, unless it is a joint meet or you have been invited to wear your hunt's colors by a Master of the hunt with which you wish to ride. To encourage participation, many hunts allow you to wear your colors and buttons if that conforms to local custom.

## **Formal Attire**

### Master – Lady or Gentleman

*Coat:* Square-cornered, single-breasted frock coat, cut to suit the wishes of the owner, with no flaps on the waistline and no pockets on the outside of the coat except an optional whistle pocket. A Master who does not hunt hounds should have four front hunt buttons. A Master who does hunt hounds should have five buttons. There should also be two hunt buttons on the back of the coat if it is a frock coat and two or three small buttons on the cuff of each sleeve. The material should be twill or Melton cloth. Scarlet (called "red" or

"scarlet", sometimes referred to as "pinks", part of an old wives' tale that will never go away) is the most traditional color for hunting, but if the regular hunt livery is of another color, that color should be worn. Many lady Masters prefer not to wear scarlet and prefer black or navy. The collar and lapels of hunt coats should be in conformity with the hunt's livery. No Master, whipper-in, huntsman or member should wear his or her hunt livery (scarlet coat, hunt colors or buttons) in another country unless invited to do so.

*Breeches:* Should be white, tan, rust, canary or buff, of heavy cord, synthetic stretch twill or other material. Lightweight breeches of synthetic knits are acceptable. With a scarlet coat, ladies and gentlemen should wear white breeches.

*Hat:* Black or dark blue velvet safety helmet approved by the American Society of Testing Materials (ASTM), with ribbons down or up, according to local custom. (Ribbons down traditionally indicate professional hunt staff.)

*Vest:* Canary, tattersall or appropriate hunt color.

*Neckwear:* Plain white hunting stock neatly tied and fastened with a plain, horizontal stock pin. Ends of the stock should be pinned down to remain tidy. *See diagram for the proper way to tie a stock tie.*

*Gloves:* Heavy wash buff, brown or black leather. White or navy wool gloves are also acceptable.

*Boots:* With scarlet coats, traditional hunting boots of black calfskin with brown tops sewn on, well-polished, with tabs sewn on but not down. White or brown boot garters (to match breeches) may be worn. Ladies wearing black or navy may wear plain black boots or boots with patent leather tops with tabs sewn on but not down. Black rubber boots are acceptable in wet weather.

*Spurs:* Of heavy pattern with moderately short neck and no rowels. Light racing spurs are not permissible. Spurs should be set high on the boot just below the ankle, and the spur arms should be parallel to the ground. The buckle should be on top of the boot with the free end of the spur strap on the outside of the boot.

*Crop:* Traditional hunting whip with lash.

*Flask and Sandwich Case:* Gentlemen may carry either a flask or sandwich case (or both). Ladies may carry either a sandwich case or a combination flask and sandwich case.

*Wire Cutters:* Wire cutters may be carried in a leather case attached to the saddle and a Leatherman tool on a personal belt.

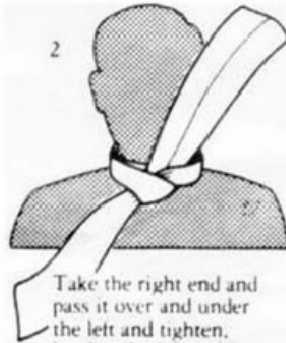
*Horn:* Masters, huntsman or designated whippers-in only. The traditional hunting horn is carried either between buttons of the coat or in a leather case fastened on either side of the front of the saddle. ***No horn should be carried by anyone except Master, huntsman, or first whipper-in when given permission by the Master.***



## How To Tie an Untied Stock Tie



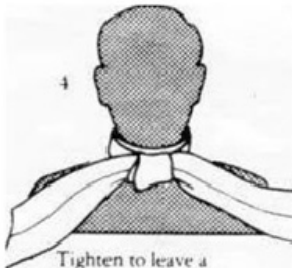
1  
Place the tie round the neck and secure it to the shirt by the front stud.



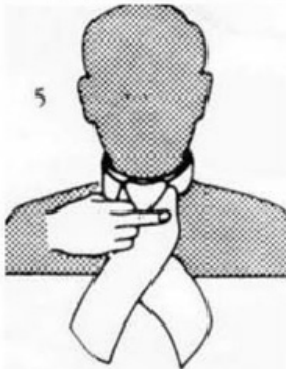
2  
Take the right end and pass it over and under the left and tighten, leaving the left end hanging down.



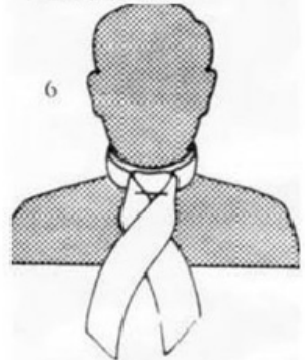
3  
A loop is next made from the right end, and the left end is passed through this.



4  
Tighten to leave a smooth looking knot.



5  
Cross the ends as illustrated and hold with the second finger of the right hand.



6  
Secure at this point with a tiepin. This must lie straight after having secured both ends into the knot.

*Diagram from Horse & Rider Etc*

### Honorary (Amateur) Huntsman, not Masters

Same as Master *except*:

*Coat*: Four buttons unless hunt policy dictates five.

*Hat*: Ribbon on hat should be up unless contrary to hunt policy.

### Professional Huntsman

Same as Honorary Huntsman *except*:

*Hat*: Ribbon on hat should be down.

*Neckwear*: Same as Master except stock pin can be worn horizontal or vertical, recommend horizontal.

*Crop*: Traditional hunting whip and lash or white whip with white lash. The lash should be long enough to strike the ground.

*Wire Cutters*: Should be carried on the huntsmen's belt should he or she be thrown and the horse caught in wire thrashing.

*Flask and Sandwich Case*: Not permitted.

*Couplings*: Should carry one set of couplings fastened to dee on off side of saddle.

### Honorary Whipper-In

Same as Honorary Huntsman *except*:

*Hat*: Ribbon on hat should be up.

*Couplings:* Should carry one set of couplings fastened to dee on off side of saddle.

*Stirrup leather:* Should be worn outside coat over right shoulder, under left arm, buckled in front with the point of the strap down if approved by Masters. A Whipper-in wearing a stirrup leather over the shoulder when not whipping-in is not appropriate.

### Professional Whipper-In

Same as Honorary Whipper-In *except:*

*Coat:* Should have a large “hare-pocket” on inside of skirt.

*Hat:* Ribbon on hat should be down.

*Neckwear:* Stock pin horizontal or vertical, recommend horizontal.

*Crop:* Regulation hunt whip and lash or white whip and lash that is long enough to strike the ground.

*Flask and Sandwich Case:* Not permitted.

*Stirrup leather:* Should be worn outside coat over right shoulder, under left arm, buckled in front with the point of the strap down.

### Gentleman Member

*Scarlet coat:* Should have rounded corners and three buttons in front, two on the back and two or three on each sleeve in brass with the insignia

adapted by the hunt. Scarlet coats are worn only by members who have been awarded their colors.

*Black coat:* Black hunting coat or frock coat cut same as scarlet coat are preferable to a shadbelly coat. Buttons should be plain or black. In hunts where the Field wears black, members wear the hunt buttons on their black coats. If not awarded colors, buttons must be plain or black. There should be three buttons on the front of the coat and two buttons on back if frock coat. It is not customary to wear hunt colors on the collar of a black coat. It is customary that brass buttons on black coats are reserved for Masters and ex-Masters.

*Breeches:* May be tan, buff or white (only with a frock coat), of heavy cord, synthetic stretch twill or other heavy material.

*Hat:* ASTM-approved safety helmet in black velvet with chin harness fastened is strongly recommended. Ribbon should be up. If you plan to wear a bowler, it is wise to check with the Master of the hunt, as some hunts do not allow them. Top hats, with optional hat-guard, may be worn with scarlet coat, frock coat or shadbelly coat, but they are not recommended by the MFHA.

*Vest:* Canary, tattersall or appropriate color designated by the Master.

*Boots:* Plain black calfskin boots without tops are worn with black hunting coat. Brown-topped boots should be worn with a scarlet frock coat. Black field boots with laces are not considered proper formal boots. White or brown boot garters (to match breeches) may be worn.

*Neckwear:* Plain white hunting stock neatly tied and fastened with a plain, *horizontal* stock pin. Ends of the stock should be pinned down to remain tidy.

*Hair:* If long, it should be confined neatly.

*Gloves:* White.

*Spurs:* Same as for Master.

*Crop:* Traditional hunting whip and lash (white whip or lash are not appropriate).

*Flask and Sandwich Case:* Permitted.

### Lady Member (Astride)

*Coat:* Frock or hunting coat of black, dark blue or dark gray, suitably cut, with plain dark buttons. If she has been awarded colors, she may wear the hunt's buttons and collar trimmings. A frock coat should have rounded corners with three buttons in front and two on back. Hunting coats should have rounded corners and three buttons on the front. Both should have two buttons on each sleeve.

*Breeches:* Buff, tan or canary (not white) cord or heavy synthetic stretch twill (not knitted) material.

*Hat:* ASTM-approved safety helmet, black or dark blue velvet with chin strap. Ribbon up. If you plan to wear a black bowler, it is wise to check with the Master of the hunt, as some hunts do not allow them. Silk top hat should

have a crown of six inches or more and should be worn, if approved, only with a frock coat. The MFHA does not recommend wearing a bowler or top hat in the hunt field. Short dressage hats are not appropriate.

*Vest:* Canary, tattersall or appropriate color designated by Hunt.

*Neckwear:* Plain white stock neatly tied and fastened with a plain, horizontal stock pin. The ends should be pinned down to remain tidy. No other jewelry should be visible.

*Hair:* Should be neatly confined. Hair nets are advisable and correct.

*Gloves:* Wash, buff, black or brown leather. White wool or navy wool or cotton string gloves in cold or rainy weather.

*Boots:* Black calfskin hunting boots without laces. Black leather or patent leather tops are appropriate with tabs sewn on but not down, especially with a frock coat. If scarlet is worn, black boots with brown leather tops with tabs sewn on but not down are appropriate.

*Spurs:* Regular hunting spurs, same as for Master

*Crop:* Light hunting whip with lash, smaller shaft than a gentlemen's (white is not appropriate).

*Sandwich Case* (or combination flask and sandwich case): Optional. Flask case is not customary.

### Lady Member (Side-Saddle)

Same as Lady Member (Astride) except:

*Habits:* Dark melton or other cloth suitably cut.

*Veil:* Must be worn with a top hat, not a bowler.

*Hat:* Silk top hat to be worn with double-breasted dress hunting coat (crown should be six inches); black bowler (derby) may be worn with plain jackets. Safety headgear in black with chin harness properly fastened is strongly recommended with ribbon up. It should be noted the top hat and derby offer no protection to the head.

### Juniors - *exceptions to the suggested attire*

It is not necessary for juniors to wear formal attire, as it is often both difficult and expensive to obtain properly fitting formal attire in small sizes. Whichever type of turnout is chosen, it should be clean and appropriate for various weather conditions, with an ASTM-approved safety helmet with chin strap properly fastened.

*Formal Attire:* Same as for Lady Member (Astride). Junior colors may be worn according to individual Hunt customs.

*Hat:* Plain, properly fitting black ASTM-approved safety helmet with chin strap properly fastened is required, with ribbon up.

*Crop:* A lightweight hunting crop with or without lash.

*Neckwear:* A plain white stock neatly tied and fastened with a plain, horizontal stock pin. Turtleneck shirts should not be worn except by very young children.

*Hair:* If long, it should be neatly confined or braided.

## Informal or Ratcatcher Attire

### Gentlemen and Ladies

*Coat:* Tweed or wool in muted color, tailored and single or double-vented.

*Breeches:* Earth tone colors – buff, tan, gray or rust.

*Hat:* Plain ASTM-approved black or brown velvet helmet with chin strap is strongly recommended, ribbon up.

*Shirt:* Ratcatcher or other light-colored shirt. Stock tie (plain or colored) with horizontal pin or man's necktie. A plain or patterned muted-color stock or necktie, with ends pinned down to remain tidy. White stock ties are not correct. Neckbands are also appropriate for ladies. Turtlenecks and polo shirts are usually reserved for children but are used in some hunts that experience extremely hot temperatures during autumn hunting season.

*Gloves:* Black or brown leather or string gloves. White is not correct.

*Boots:* Brown or black leather dress boots or brown field boots with laces. Formal boots with brown, patent or leather tops are not appropriate. Rubber boots are acceptable, as are canvas-topped (Newmarket) boots, and jodhpur boots with either canvas or leather leggings. Three-buckle brown field boots are also correct.

*Spurs:* Regular hunting spurs with no rowels.

*Crop:* Regulation hunting whip. Thong or lash may be removed during cubhunting. White whip or lash is not correct.

*Wire Cutters, Flask, Sandwich Case:* Same as in formal attire.



## Lady Member – Side Saddle

*Coat:* Beige, brown or off-white; suitably cut; plain, tweed or salt sack.

*Skirt:* Should coordinate with the coat.

*Hat:* Bowler, velvet hunting cap or black velvet ASTM- approved safety helmet with chin harness fastened. Bowlers and velvet hunting caps without chin straps do not protect the head when hunting.

*Veil:* Not appropriate for informal attire.

## **Accessories**

*Raincoats:* Masters may allow certain rain gear (common sense should prevail). They should be used sparingly in muted colors (brown, black or dark green). Staff may wear red rain gear or yellow if approved by the Master.

*Eyewear:* Sunglasses or tinted eyewear are not recommended unless specifically prescribed or recommended by a physician or allowed by the Master. This does not preclude clear prescription glasses. It is common practice for riders in hunts in the western US to wear sunglasses.

## **Tack Appointments**

Horses and all tack should be impeccably groomed, clean, polished and shining. It is a disservice to the landowners to do anything less.

*Bridle:* Brown leather with either double or single reins. A cavesson (noseband) should be used. Colored or ornamental browbands are not acceptable.

*Breastplate:* Optional, plain or raised leather. Martingale attachment optional.

*Martingale:* Optional; if used, it should be in plain or raised leather. A running martingale must have stops on the reins.

*Saddle:* Brown. Saddle pads should be saddle-shaped, of a light color (white, buff, yellow). Numnahs or saddle cloths are not proper. Stirrup irons with optional pads should be large, plain and clean (shined). Safety equipment such as cruppers, grazing over-checks and safety stirrups should be used whenever needed.

*Girth:* Preferably brown leather, but clean neoprene, string and cloth girths are permissible, as are girth covers made of fleece.

*Accessories:* Accessories such as figure eight and flash nosebands, bell and shin boots, gel and cushion saddle pads may be used for safety, comfort or health of the horse. Accessories like fly hoods and ear or muzzle covers are not appropriate in the hunting field.

*Clipped horses:* Clipping provides horses the ability to more effectively thermoregulate their bodies. Therefore, full body clips with the leg hair left long are recommended. Trace clipping does not provide for efficient thermoregulation, and ornamental clipping is inappropriate.

# Hunting Terms

## **Autumn Hunting**

Very early in the year when hounds first start hunting. Young hounds are learning to hunt; older hounds are getting conditioned; young foxes are learning to evade hounds; and horses and riders are getting in shape. It is a time when hunt attire is rat catcher and the hunt usually doesn't stay out as long for fear of exhausting young hounds. Autumn used to be called cub hunting or cubbing.

## **Away**

When the quarry has left a cover and gone away; the hounds are gone away.

## **Babbling**

When hounds are giving voice or barking for no good reason. It could be nothing or the faint scent of the

quarry too long gone to run. It is not good because it distracts other hounds from working to find the prey.

## **Back**

When the quarry heads back to where it came from, Tally-ho back; if the hounds come out going the wrong way, the term is "hark back."

## **Biddability**

The hounds' desire to please and willingness to be controlled.

## **Billet**

The excrement of the fox, which is distinguished from all other, by the fur of rabbits, which is nearly always to be seen in it. It is always very dark.

## **Blooding**

A tradition going back to ancient times where the blood of an animal

that was killed is smeared on a person's forehead and cheeks. The practice was done only on people who experienced their first kill on a hunt. It is significant to honor the dead animal. Some hunts still blood people who request it. The MFHA does not recommend it because too many people don't understand why it's done. It does not however forbid it.

### **Blue Bird Day**

Thought to be a bad scenting day with blue skies and no clouds.

### **Blue Haze**

Thought to be a bad scenting day when a blue haze or fog is present.

### **Bumping the line**

Refers to hounds finding and losing the scent or line of the quarry over and over.

### **Burst**

The first part of a run out of cover, if quick, is called a sharp burst.

### **Burst him**

A term used when a fox is killed, owing to a sharp burst.

### **Burning scent**

The English definition is when hounds run almost mute, owing to the strength of the scent. An American definition is when scent is where hounds can carry the line without putting their noses down and the cry turns to a roar as they gain on their quarry.

### **Buttons**

Hunt buttons are awarded with hunt colors. Each button has the logo of the hunt engraved on it. Hunt buttons are only worn with formal attire.

### **Breast high**

Also a burning scent, when hounds run at utmost speed because of breast high scent. They do not stoop their heads, and go a racing pace.

### **Brush**

The tail of a fox or coyote. Awarded upon a kill by the Master.

### **Capping**

When a fox is killed, it is the custom in some countries to cap (give a tip) for the huntsman; some man takes around a cap or glove, and men are expected to drop a tip into it. It also means, when a man takes off his hat or cap, and waves it to bring the huntsman to a view. Capping is when you visit a hunt that you are not a member of. You pay a capping fee to the Secretary of the Hunt before you leave the meet.

### **Carries**

After a frost the ground adheres to the quarry's feet; then the ground carries.

### **Carry a good head**

When hounds run well together owing to the scent being good, and spread out so that they extend wide enough in the front for almost the whole pack to smell the line. But it most frequently happens that the scent is good only on a narrow line, for a few hounds to get it; so that the back hounds have less scent to lead them on, and do not get to head so as to be all abreast.

### **Cast**

When the huntsman sends hounds into a cover or brings them together and then sends them another direction, he is said to be casting his hounds.

### **Challenge**

When drawing for a fox, the first hound, which throws his tongue, is a challenge.

### **Changed**

When hounds have left their hunted fox and changed to another.

### **Check**

When hounds in chase stop for want of scent, or have overrun it.

### **Cheering**

When hounds are encouraged by a horn or halloo.

### **Chop't the quarry**

When the quarry is killed as soon as found. There is no run, it usually happens with very sick, wounded or hurt quarry caught napping in open areas.

### **Colors**

Every hunt has their particular color. This color is worn on their collar and lapel when wearing

scarlet. When hunting in formal attire riders have either scarlet or black coats, but the colors on their collar are always the same. Only members who have been awarded colors can wear that color on their coats. Members without colors must wear a plain black coat.

When a member has been awarded their colors it is considered an honor acknowledging them as full status members of the hunt. Once awarded colors they must wear hunt buttons on any coat with colors.

### **Cold-hunting or Trailing**

When hounds can scarcely smell a scent, and pick it out with difficulty. Hounds speak intermittently when cold trailing.

### **Couple**

You count mounted hunting hounds by twos, the number of couples.

**Cover**

Any somewhat thick place that will hold the quarry.

**Covert**

The cover where the hounds look for the quarry. It can be: heavy brush, thick grass, woods, or anything that requires the hounds search through it.

**Crash**

When hounds are running in cover, and it appears that everyone is there, it is called a good crash.

**Cub**

A young fox or coyote.

**Cubbing or Cub Hunting** (also Autumn Hunting)

Hunting early in the season. A period where hounds go out very early. Young hounds learn to chase the quarry and young quarry learn to get away from hounds. Usually very short early morning hunts in

informal attire. In the early days in England, it referred to a time they would try to cull young fox populations early in the season.

**Downwind**

When hounds are running with the wind behind them.

**Drawing**

When hounds are working a covert or an area they are said to be drawing it.

**Drafted**

When hounds are given to another hunt they are drafted.

**Draft**

When you get a hound from another Hunt.

**Drag**

The scent left by the footsteps of the fox or coyote. Also the scent left from a lure dragged on the ground for hounds to follow simulating a live fox in a drag hunt.

**Drain**

Underground where foxes or coyote often run to. Often it is a man-made culvert or pipe.

**Due on spider webs**

Said to indicate bad scenting conditions.

**Dwelling**

A hound that gives tongue, but does not move on. When hounds do not get on to the huntsman's halloo, probably feeling a stale scent sometimes, till moved by the whipper-in; also, a slow huntsman is apt to dwell.

**Earth Stopping**

Refers to old days in England when before the hunt, fox dens were plugged up to prevent the fox from an early retreat and to have a longer chase. The MFHA considers it absolutely unsporting. It is

against the rules both in the USA and now in England.

**Eloo back**

When hounds come out, to turn them back.

**Eye to hounds**

A person is said to have a good eye to hounds, whose eyes in the chase are always fixed on the leading hound or hounds; by which he has a great advantage over others, as he turns his horses' head whichever way the leading hound goes immediately. This person is a menace if he is riding too forward or close resulting in turning the game.

**Excitement Riot or Mettle in England**

When hounds are very fresh, and fly for a short distance on no scent.



**Feeling a scent**

A termed used when any hounds smells the scent; when bad, it is said they can scarcely feel the scent.

**Field Secretary**

The person a hunt designates who when people arrive at the meet collects caps, gets waivers signed and directs parking is sometimes called the field secretary.

**Flighty**

A hound which is not a steady hunter is called flighty; also, when the scent changes from good to bad repeatedly, it is called flighty scent.

**Forward**

A halloo implies to get on; or that the hounds are running ahead of you.

**Foil**

When the quarry runs the ground over which he has been before, it is

called running his foil; sometimes a reason for hounds not being able to hunt it where they have been before. It also includes the quarry running through farm animals like sheep or cattle to foil the scent or spread manure. Whatever causes a good scenting line to no longer be smelled.

**Full cry**

When the whole pack is running hard after the quarry and throwing or giving tongue.

**Going to cover**

Is going to the place where the quarry is likely to be found in order to draw.

**Gone to Ground**

When a fox or coyote goes into a natural earth, hole or drain.

**Handles a pack**

A term used when speaking of a huntsman who, sensing that

hounds are at an irretrievable loss, picks them up to cast in the direction he thinks the game has gone.

### **Hark! Halloa!**

When a person hears a halloo at a distance, and the huntsman does not, he should halloa, “Hark! Halloo!” and point with his whip, if in sight of him.

### **Headed**

When the quarry is going away, but is headed, that is, turned back the way he came or away from its intended path. Usually used to refer to a person/persons or horses that headed the quarry.

### **Heel**

The hounds are said to be running heel when they get on the scent of the quarry, and run it back the way the quarry came from instead of the way it went.

### **Hit**

When hounds are at check, and recover the scent, it is hitting it off. Or the first hound that smells the scent is said to have made a good hit.

### **Hold hard**

A huntsman’s or field master’s verbal to quickly stop others who are for whatever reason: usually when the pack checks to keep from riding over the line. When overzealous or eager riders are pressing hounds too closely.

### **Hold them on**

For huntsmen to take the hounds forward, and try to regain the scent.

### **Hooi**

The view halloo, if tally ho is not heard; or when hounds are at a check, and it is desirable to get them on.

**Holding scent**

When the scent is just good enough to hunt the quarry a fair pace but not enough to press him.

**Hunt Breakfast**

A brunch after a hunt. Normal attire is your hunt coat or change to a sport coat. Spurs should be removed and boots cleaned before entering.

**Hunting whip**

Consists of a crop and lash specifically for mounted hunting. Only staff are allowed to use around hounds and is seldom if ever used to hit them. It can be cracked to get hounds heads up or shown to get a hound to move in a particular direction. Field members can carry a hunting whip, but it is only used if they are asked to help whip-in, to open gates or pick up something that has dropped.

**Laid up**

When a vixen fox or coyote bitch has had cubs or pups, she is said to have laid up.

**Laying**

That part of a covert in which quarry is generally found.

**Line hunters**

Any good hounds which will not go a yard beyond the scent, and keep the pack right – invaluable hounds; by some called ploughholders because they can smell and hold the line on ploughed ground.

**Left-handed**

Such hounds are called left-handed which are not always right, but apt to be too wide, and fly without a scent; the sooner they are drafted the better, although they frequently have some excellent qualities.

**Lieu in**

Get in place; get in there (originally came from the French).

**Litter**

Young foxes or coyotes, or the cubs or pups belonging to fox or coyote. Young foxhounds with the same dam and sire are also called a litter.

**Lifting**

When hounds are scarcely able to hunt a scent across bad scenting ground, the huntsman is induced to take them off it and move them forward where he thinks he may hit off the scent; probably to a halloo. Some sportsmen condemn the practice preferring the hounds find the line on their own. Others believe it is good as long as it isn't done too often to make up ground on the quarry. Particularly in country where scent is bad, an example would be high desert.

**Lure**

The formula of the scent used on a drag line. The lure is dispersed on a rag or some type of disperser and drug on a drag line. It can also be dropped as a liquid directly to the ground. It can be fox or coyote urine, or a mixture of fox or coyote urine mixed or diluted with water, anisette or anything that will make it last longer, or give it the desired results of simulating a pack chasing a quarry.

**Main earths**

Large earths in which foxes generally breed.

**Mask**

The head of the fox or coyote. Awarded upon a kill by the Master and then mounted by a taxidermist.

**Moving scent**

When hounds get on a scent that is fresher than a drag; that is, the

scent of the quarry which has been disturbed while traveling.

### **Mute**

Hounds run silent or mute when the scent is so good that the pace they go prevents their giving/throwing tongue; but if a hound always runs mute, it is an unpardonable fault, even if in every other respect he is the best hound in the pack. The better he is the more harm he does.

### **Noisy**

When a hound gives his tongue without a scent. This can also be called babbling. It is a bad trait and distracts other hounds from hunting.

### **Open**

When a hound gives tongue he is said to open on the scent.

### **Open Bitches**

Unspayed bitches that can be bred.

### **Owning a scent**

When hounds give tongue on the scent, they own the line.

### **Over it**

When hounds have gone beyond their scent in chase, it is said they are over it.

### **Pad**

The foot of a fox or coyote. Also can be awarded by a Master upon a kill.

### **Padding a fox**

Finding the print of a fox's foot.

### **Pinks**

A term used to describe the red or scarlet hunt coat. Originated from a fable of a tailor whose last name was Mr. Pinque who supposedly made the first red hunt coats.

People started calling red coats pinks after the tailor and it caught on. Maybe this came about because some red coats bleach out to pink after enough use or it was a name

dropping trend for those in the know. The correct term is red or scarlet.

### **Point-to-Point**

The distance of a run on a map by a straight line. Also the name of a race used by Hunts to make money for the Hunt. The races usually involve jumping; simulating what is required from horses that hunt.

### **Rabbit earth or spout**

Where a fox sometimes gets into when pressed: meant to imply that it is not a regular fox earth.

### **Rat Catcher**

The clothing worn before the formal season begins or on days designated by the hunt. Also called informal attire.

### **Rate**

You rate a hound when you change its behavior. You can do this with you or your horses body language,

your eyes, your voice, a lash or any other means used to stop it and get it to do what is expected.

### **Reaching**

Reaching means hounds reach forward well ahead of the huntsman, looking for their fox. The term can also be used when describing hounds' action at a check. Once hounds have lost at the check, they should fan out and reach well forward, covering large areas.

### **Riot**

When hounds hunt anything besides intended quarry it is called riot; the rate used is "Ware riot".

### **Roading Hounds**

Anytime you have the pack, packed up moving alongside a road.

### **Scarlets**

Formal function attire. Individual hunt colors are worn on the collar

and lapel. Scarlets are traditionally a swallow tail. It is traditional that ladies wear black or white gowns at formal hunt functions like a ball or dinner.

### **Skirter**

A hound which is generally too wide of the pack and not running the actual line. Hounds do this to get an unfair advantage getting to the front. Usually involves avoiding the thick places; skirthers break a packs heart and should be culled.

### **Stroke of a fox**

Is when hounds are drawing, it is evident from their manner that they feel the scent of a fox, although they do not own it.

### **Sinking**

The quarry is said to be sinking when it is nearly beaten.

### **Sinking the wind**

When people go downwind to hear the cry, it is called sinking the wind of the hounds.

### **Stained**

Also called foil, when the ground has been passed over by cattle, sheep, other livestock and/or the hounds or the field before.

### **Stopping**

When hounds will not hunt, it is said they will not stoop to the scent; that is, will not put their noses to the ground.

### **Stern**

A hound's tail.

### **Slack**

When the scent is bad, hounds are apt to be indifferent and will scarcely try to hunt their quarry, and are said to be slack.

**Streaming**

When hounds go over or across an open country, like a flock of pigeons, it is called streaming away.

**Speaks**

When a hound smells the scent, it is sometimes said such a hound speaks to it.

**Steady**

When a hound will not run trash or deer he is considered steady.

**Tally ho**

The halloo when anyone sees the quarry, and only then; if desirable to halloo it loudly. Field members do not use tally ho or halloo when riding the field. They report the sighting to the Masters.

**Tally ho back**

When the fox comes out, and heads back again.

**Throwing tongue**

When a hound barks or gives voice.

**Throw up**

The exact spot where the hounds lost the scent in chase is known by their throwing up their heads; and it is said they threw up here.

**Ticklish scent**

When the scent varies from good to bad; and at times scarcely any in the chase, although just before it was very good.

**Tight in his tongue**

When a hound seldom throws his tongue, though not quite mute, it is said he is tight in his tongue.

**Tipping**

It is appropriate and traditional to tip the professional huntsman when given a special kennel visit or an unusually good day hunting. It is also appropriate to tip the



professional huntsman when a hunt drafts you a hound.

### **Trash**

Refers to hounds chasing something they shouldn't be chasing.

### **View Halloo**

A loud rebel yell or scream used when viewing the quarry. Usually only whippers-in and huntsmen are allowed to use it. It is never used if hounds have opened on the quarry, only when hounds have not found and the quarry is viewed by a whipper-in. Also called holloa, hooi, rebel yell. Others would use the

term "tally ho" when the quarry is viewed, but never while in the field of riders.

### **Ware**

Shortened form of beware. To take note of something you need to avoid. Usually ware hound, ware wire, ware hole.

### **White whip**

A white crop and lash (the normal color is brown) only used by huntsmen on special formal days.

### **Whoop**

The death halloo.





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