

# CODE OF HUNTING PRACTICES



2015



## ***OTHER PUBLICATIONS***

*Constitution & By-Laws; 2010*

*Forming a Hunt: Considerations and Structure; 2003*

*Foxhound Kennel Notebook (4th Edition); 2007*

*Guidebook & Rules; 2015*

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

COMMITTEE .....	1
RULES.....	2
RADIOS.....	5
MOUNTED FOLLOWERS.....	6
CAR FOLLOWERS .....	7
FOOT FOLLOWERS.....	8
GENERALLY .....	8

## COMMITTEE

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# CODE OF HUNTING PRACTICES

## RULES

Mounted foxhunting has been an integral and important part of rural life in the United States and Canada for centuries. The beneficial role it plays in conservation, the physical beauty of the countryside and the positive impact in the local economy is unquestioned.

Hunting takes place in public. We must all assume that our activities will be observed by the public and we must be prepared to be held publicly accountable for our actions.

This Code of Hunting Practices guidebook is aimed at ensuring that not only newcomers to hunting, but everyone who participates understands that it is their absolute obligation to maintain the highest standards of sportsmanship and good behavior at all times. In the case of Masters, this responsibility extends to the care of hounds. It is the Masters' obligation to ensure that hounds are kenneled in safe, clean, adequate kennels and that hounds are well fed, regularly exercised and properly handled in the hunting field.

By accepting membership in the Masters of Foxhounds Association (MFHA), the Masters and the hunt's governing body agree to be bound by its "Constitution & By-Laws", "Code of Hunting Practices" and "Guidelines & Rules", as amended, and relevant, local, state and federal laws. Furthermore, the hunt and its Masters will cooperate with any investigation of alleged infractions and will accept as final the decision of the MFHA on any question arising under said "Constitution & By-laws", "Code of Hunting Practices", "Guidelines & Rules" or relevant, local state and federal laws. The hunt and Masters agree to indemnify and hold the MFHA, their officers, directors and employees harmless for any action taken against the hunt pursuant to this agreement.

1. Mounted foxhunting as a sport is the hunting of the fox, coyote, bobcat or other acceptable quarry in its wild and natural state with a pack of hounds. Nothing must be done which in any way compromises this rule.
2. Hunting flourishes entirely because of the goodwill of landowners and farmers. No one who goes hunting should do anything to jeopardize this goodwill. Be constantly aware that you are a guest on someone else's land.
3. The sport of mounted foxhunting as it is practiced in North America places emphasis on the chase and not the kill. It is inevitable, however, that hounds will at times catch their game. Death is instantaneous. In some instances, a pack of hounds will account for their quarry by running it to ground, treeing it, or bringing it to bay. The MFHA has laid down detailed rules to govern the behavior of Masters, staff and their packs of hounds. The most important are as follows:
  - a) The hunting of a "bagged" or "dropped" quarry, or any other practice which does not give the animal a sporting chance, is contrary to the best traditions of the sport and is strictly forbidden.
  - b) When the quarry is run to ground, treed, or is brought to bay, if, in accordance with the wishes of the landowner, the decision is that it be culled, it must be quickly and humanely dispatched by a member of the hunt staff. It is the responsibility of the Masters and hunt professionals to avoid the participation of the general public.
  - c) When the quarry is run to ground, there shall be no digging other than for the purpose of humanely destroying it according to the wishes of the landowner.
  - d) The reason we call the sport "fox hunting" and not "fox chasing" (unless the animal needs to be culled) is that despite the fact our emphasis is the chase; the hounds are hunting their

quarry and trying to catch it. Studies and reality confirm that hounds are a quick and humane method to dispatch an animal. Normally the quarry eludes hounds unscathed. We, as ethical hunters, are obligated to assure any hunted animal is dispatched quickly, fairly and humanely. In addition, as sportsmen, we have an obligation to find and quickly dispatch any wounded or sick quarry known to be in our hunt's area. Any quarry which has had to be handled must be humanely destroyed or if deemed to be unharmed should be freed. Under no circumstances may it be hunted. When the quarry is run to ground, treed or brought to bay, this same animal may not be bolted or knocked out of a tree and run again. However, it is permissible to bolt and hunt quarry that has taken refuge in a manmade structure such as a culvert, woodpile, hay shed, deserted house, etcetera. Hounds must be taken out of sight of the refuge at a reasonable and sporting distance and a reasonable amount of time allowed to elapse before the pack is put back on the line.

- e) Use of Terriers: The decision to use a terrier demands a high burden of responsibility for the wellbeing of the terrier and should only be taken with a Master present. A terrier may never be used to bolt quarry that has gone to ground except in the rare case where the quarry has gone to ground and the landowner has specifically asked that the quarry be dispatched. In this circumstance, the quarry must be humanely dispatched and hounds shall not be in any way involved. If hunt staff are involved, one of the Masters must be present and is responsible for ensuring that the matter is handled properly and without public spectacle. All of the above must be conducted subject to local, state and federal laws.
- f) It is the responsibility of the Masters to understand and explain unequivocally to their huntsman and staff the importance of adhering to these rules. Violators will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with MFHA rules and by-laws.

- g) The tradition of bleeding originated in ancient times as a historic ritual to honor the hunted animal. It is the position of the MFHA that this practice not be encouraged, as it is too easily misunderstood and misinterpreted. If this tradition remains in a given hunt it should be left up to the individual member as to whether he or she wants to participate. However, discretion is vital.
  - h) There shall be no stopping of earths under any circumstances.
  - i) The MFHA does not consider the use of Foxhunting Training Preserves (FTP's) to be at all central to the sport of foxhunting. The MFHA does not endorse or promote the use of Foxhunting Training Preserves. A Foxhunting Training Preserve is for training and evaluating hounds. It should never be listed as a fixture, used as a meet or competition for member hunts. Wearing of colors or formal hunting attire is forbidden when using these facilities. Additional considerations are listed in the "MFHA Guidebook & Rules."
4. Masters of Foxhounds or their appointed agents are solely responsible for conducting the day's hunting and are bound by the strict rules and instructions of the MFHA. Their authority and responsibility is absolute and their instructions must always be cheerfully obeyed. The field should remember that the staff is accountable only to the Masters and huntsman. At no time should the field instruct or interfere with the professional or honorary staffs' job in the hunting field, the kennels or the hunt country.

## **RADIOS**

The development and suburbanization of traditional hunting countries, the increase in automobile traffic, and the building of high speed roads have heightened the need for Masters to be constantly aware of the safety of their hounds, hunt participants and the general public. The spread of

coyotes throughout traditional fox hunting countries has exacerbated this problem because coyotes cover more territory and tend to run straight or unpredictably. The use of radios and other modern electronic equipment has evolved as a result:

1. Radios are used to protect hounds and promote safety of the public.
2. Radios are not meant to supplant the traditional use of voice, traditional signal and/or the horn while hunting a pack of hounds.
3. Usage of radios should not be an obtrusive or noisy disturbance to members of the mounted field. If used properly, the radio is an effective tool for communication between staff members when necessary. Usage should be kept to a minimum.
4. The MFHA supports the concept of posting road whips with radios in vehicles for enhancement of radio signals and safety.

## **MOUNTED FOLLOWERS**

Because the hunt meets by arrangement and is recognizable and therefore accountable, mounted followers enjoy access to large areas of countryside denied to other people. When following hounds mounted, you must:

1. Conform to local standards of behavior. These are many and various. Find out what the local practices are and observe them strictly.
2. Ensure that your turnout is neat, clean and safe.
3. You must not block roads or access to farm equipment.
4. Be punctual at the meet. All Masters should establish policy that deals with late arrivals and early departures.

5. Make a sincere attempt not to cause damage. If you break a fence or cause or notice damage of any kind, report it immediately to the Master or secretary.
6. Leave gates the way you find them. If there is any question concerning a jump, fence or gate contact the Master, Field Master or staff and if unable to do so, contact the landowner or farm manager to find out the correct disposition of same.
7. Go slowly through or around livestock to prevent disturbing them. Never cross a planted field; go around the headland.
8. Under no circumstances should anyone ride across lawns, gardens or manicured areas in such a fashion as to cause damage.
9. Obtain permission before parking your trailer or van and position the vehicle to avoid causing obstructions. Be sensitive to the fact that not everyone enjoys the presence of either horses or the evidence they leave behind.
10. Above all, obey the Master, Field Master, and huntsman.

### **CAR FOLLOWERS**

Car followers are welcome, but they must also obey the rules.

1. Do not interrupt the flow of traffic. Courtesy must be shown to every motorist.
2. Do not obstruct gateways or drives.
3. Do not drive vehicles into private drives; farmland or open country unless you are sure that proper permission has been obtained.
4. Keep together as much as possible and try to avoid heading the quarry or getting between hounds and their game.

5. If hounds or horses are nearby, stop in a safe, legal place and switch off your engine. Exhaust fumes mask scent and irritate hounds' noses.
6. Please do all you can to help the hunt. When you leave your vehicle, follow the code for foot followers.

### **FOOT FOLLOWERS**

Foot followers can be very helpful to the hunt both during a day's hunting and at other times. Please remember:

1. If you leave the road, you become a guest on someone's land and should behave accordingly.
2. Do not get into such a position as to head the quarry; to do so is to spoil your own and everyone else's sport.
3. Be as quiet as possible.
4. If you see the quarry, let it get well past you before signaling the huntsman with a holloa, holding up your cap or a white handkerchief.
5. Leave gates the way you found them. Be ready to open or close gates for the hunt staff. Report any damage you see to the Master, Field Master or secretary.

### **GENERALLY**

1. Accidental trespass cannot always be avoided, but the wishes of all landowners, no matter how small, must be respected. Every effort must be made to prevent hounds and followers from hunting the quarry into a "built-up" area or straying into places where they are not welcome.

2. Animal rights activists can be extremely irritating and may even break the law. Hunt followers must resist the temptation to retaliate in kind no matter what the provocation.
3. Many people use the countryside, some of whom have no interest in hunting. We must make every effort not to offend these people in any way. Common courtesy, in the form of a simple 'please', 'thank you', or a warm smile costs nothing. Politeness and a pleasant manner will go far to ensure the future of foxhunting.





