

# A Guide to Being a Master of Foxhounds



Dr. Marvin Beeman, Master and Huntsman of Arapahoe Hunt  
Roni Bell Photo



MFHA Foundation Presents

# **A Guide to Being a Master of Foxhounds**

2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

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# A MASTER'S GUIDEBOOK

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## Skills and Abilities Required Within a Mastership

The information contained in this guide has been compiled from many sources and countries. More detailed information is included in other MFHA publications and guides given to all new Masters, including the following:

*Code of Hunting Practices*

*Constitution & Bylaws*

*Foxhound Kennel Notebook*

*Guide to Kennel Standards of Care Checklist*

*Guidebook & Rules*

*Introduction to Foxhunting*

Masters should attend any briefings or seminars organized by the MFHA and the annual membership meeting.

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## Introduction

The ideal Master of Hounds possesses many exceptional qualities: a love for hounds, horses, nature, wild animals and conservation; a consuming passion for foxhunting's lifestyle; a dedication to organizing the best hunt and best sport possible; a willingness to sacrifice much personal time for the good of the hunt, realizing that the reward will be the privilege of being a Master of Foxhounds; and a willingness to live by a time-honored code of ethics that identifies you as a gentleman or lady and establishes that your word is your bond.

In the early days of foxhunting, most Masters were born into the sport. Most hunts were private packs and the Masters had the means, owned the land and managed their own hounds and hunt. They invited friends and neighbors to hunt with them, and often the children of these Masters took over as age or circumstance dictated, keeping hunts within families. With few exceptions, those days are long gone. While now there are a few Masters who are wealthy and a few who make it on a shoestring, today the average Master is middle income.

Most Masters are either elected or appointed to office, depending on whether the hunt is a subscription or membership pack. Private hunts are the rare exception. It is estimated the average Master's term of service is eight (8) years, so Masters come and go fairly frequently, often with little direct experience to prepare them for mastership. Short masterships are detrimental to hunts in many ways. One needs time to learn and develop knowledge of and friendship with landowners, to make competent and well considered breeding decisions, to earn respect from hunt staff, members or subscribers and develop wisdom about all aspects involved in maintaining a first class pack of hounds. These necessary talents are hard to develop with short-term masterships.

Masters who were brought up by a father or mother and lived in the hunting life, who hunted as children and were tutored by parents who were Masters are extremely rare. So how does a Master learn what it takes to be a good Master of Hounds? We hope this guide will assist all Masters in

understanding the responsibilities, requirements and ethics needed to be successful and enjoy their position.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this booklet is to outline the basic competencies that are required within each hunt so as to advise Masters on what is collectively expected of them.

A Master is always a Master no matter his or her vocation or occupation. Masters not only represent the hunt, but also represent the sport of foxhunting.

Subscribing members of the MFHA are the key to the future of mounted hunting. Every hunt formed after 2004 must require their entire membership to be subscribing members. Hunts formed prior to that should make it a requirement. Masters have a responsibility to look to the future and do everything in their power to protect the sport for future generations.

## **Scope/Extent**

It is vital that there are clear, accepted and understood lines of responsibility (read the “MFHA Guide to Forming a Hunt”) among the following:

First, among the Masters and the officers of the hunt committee (chairman, secretary and treasurer), particularly on financial and property matters, and second, between individual Masters. Problems arise all too frequently because of a lack of understanding of who is responsible for what. When problems do occur, they should be dealt with by the previously appointed person in charge of that aspect of the hunt.

### Employment of Hunt Professionals

All hunt staff should have valid contracts of employment that conform to current employment laws. The employment year for hunt staff commences on the first of May and expires at the end of the following April. The sooner the professional or the hunt gives notice of non-renewal, the sooner they can get on the “Hunt Staff Registry”, ensuring the hunt and staff a better chance of finding a good candidate or job. Notice must be given to or received from hunt staff by the first of January at the very latest. Hunt staff are protected by employment laws that vary tremendously from state to state and in Canada. That may mean their employment is protected by state and federal laws should there be discrepancies in their contracts. Verbal contracts are honored by many states and the MFHA.

An employee's contract of employment should state who the employer is. The MFHA guide, “Forming a Hunt” provides a generic professional contract and valuable information to minimize later problems. It can also be downloaded from the MFHA website. Professional hunt staff must acknowledge the chain of command and have one immediate supervisor.

Some hunts do not use labor contracts under the assumption that poor performance is protected by such a contract. They prefer employees understand that good performance is the only thing that ensures that their position is secure. Verbal contracts are acceptable, but if problems arise they can be difficult.

All hunt employees should receive clear instructions on duties and the conduct expected of them. Whenever possible that should be in writing. Hunt employees should have adequate salaries, living conditions, medical and workers compensation insurance and retirement plans.

Huntsmen and professional whippers-in must be provided good horses to do their jobs. The hunt should also provide clothing, helmet, boots, tack and transportation for horses and hounds.

Huntsmen and whippers-in are judged by the quality of sport they provide, condition of hounds and kennels, punctuality, politeness and turn out. A huntsman's job is not a normal 8 to 5 job. It is whatever time it takes to get the job done, which is why hunt professionals are salaried, not hourly employees. Professionals should have at least one day a week off and an annual vacation.

Professional whippers-in are accountable to the huntsman and to the Masters.

Masters and professionals should be aware of dismissal and disciplinary procedures for misconduct. Warnings should be in writing. Masters should have an understanding of employment laws. When possible Masters should make pension arrangements for their staff and arrange for the hunt to contribute to them.

All Masters should understand the purpose of procedures for benefits available to hunt employees under the Hunt Staff Benefit Foundation (HSBF) so that deserving and eligible hunt employees needing assistance are not overlooked. The HSBF provides monetary assistance to past or present hunt staff professionals and their families who may find themselves in dire financial need. Grants can take the form of assistance with medical bills in unusual circumstances. Grants are made only to those whose circumstances (health or financial crises) warrant our help. Grants are sometimes provided to widows and close family members of deceased hunt professionals whose loss has devastated their lives. Additional information about this program can be found on the MFHA website.

The MFHA Foundation and HSBF Professional Development Program (PDP) is designed to improve the performance and thus the quality of hunting for huntsmen and whippers-in and to assist in acquiring new hunt professionals from the USA, Canada and other countries. The MFHA has a goal to educate Masters.

## **Running a Hunt Kennel**

More information can be found in the “Foxhound Kennel Notebook” and the “MFHA Guidebook & Rules.” The MFHA “Guide to Kennel Standards of Care Checklist” has been given to each hunt and should be displayed where it can be seen.

One Master only needs to be designated to oversee the kennel staff, the kennels and the hounds.

The kennels should smell clean and fresh and should provide sufficient room to accommodate the number of hounds housed, good ventilation with adequate air exchange and a draft-free and comfortable environment. The importance of readily available fresh water cannot be overstated. Check state and county ordinances to determine if a septic tank is required. Regular waste removal is required. State and local laws may apply. Scrupulous attention to hygiene is essential. Rodent control is a must. Purchases of food, bedding and equipment need to be planned well in advance and overseen. Good quality oat hay, straw or wood shavings make the best bedding.

There should be an inventory of all equipment and an agreed-upon system for purchasing new equipment. It must be clear who is responsible for the maintenance of buildings, lawns and drainage.

## **Hounds, Exercise and Feeding**

Thirty couple of hounds are more than adequate for a two-day-a-week country. Hounds that are not hunting regularly soon get over fresh and out of tune.

Regular exercise is essential for the good health of the hounds. Hounds should be walked out at least once but preferably twice a day. Hound exercise should be geared to ensure the hounds are fit enough to meet the demands of their hunting activities. It is the time to start training the hounds to look for their huntsman (rather than his looking for them). Areas should be found where hounds can be given plenty of freedom, even if this means trailering them out.

Grass yards are very useful, but they should not be used as a replacement for walking out. When they are used, they must be regularly cleansed of feces. There should be shade and benches low enough to the ground to permit a hound to be able to protect itself should other hounds try to harass it.

Masters must ensure that their huntsman has sufficient and capable assistance to exercise the hounds daily throughout the year and that exercise is carried out with due respect to members of the public.

The Master in charge of the kennels should consult with the huntsman on the feeding program. He or she should observe the hounds and if individual hounds are overweight or too thin see that they are let out late or early to eat with the pack accordingly. If dry food is fed, the amount should be varied according to the work level of the hounds. It is a huge mistake not to feed the highest quality dry food, which means the highest protein and fat percentages the hunt can afford. If flesh is fed, only good meat must be used.

### **Veterinary Arrangements (Kennels)**

It is essential that there is a good relationship with a veterinary practice and that there is one principal contact within the practice. That person's contact information should be clearly available in your kennel and on staff cell phones. The "MFHA Guide to Kennels Standards of Care Checklist" laminated poster should be clearly visible.

Hound health programs should be drawn up and preventative measures taken (vaccinations and worming). A detailed log book or software program should identify the past and present schedule for these requirements.

The huntsman/kennel huntsman must have authority to act in emergency situations.

## Hounds and Breeding

Every Master, regardless of his or her duties to the hunt, should be familiar with both versions of the “Foxhound Stud Book” (book and online) regardless of their knowledge of hounds. The best advice the MFHA can give a Master is to know your hounds. You must realize the hunt’s emphasis and priority should always be hounds. Their proper care, safety, health and breeding are vital to the future. Nothing is more important to hunting than the quality of the pack. Everything else that happens in a hunt is second to hounds. A Master that doesn’t know the hounds in his or her pack will not get nor deserve respect equal to that of Masters who do know them.

A Master must be involved in the breeding plan. Especially when hiring a new huntsman, care must be taken to ensure that changes in the breeding program or drafting of hounds into or out of the kennel are well planned and approved by a Master in consultation with the new huntsman.

Make your breeding plans well in advance of bitches coming into season by selecting the best hunting bitches that have sound conformation and by choosing the best available stallion hound to cover them. Other hunts are glad to have their stallions used if your bitch has a recent negative Brucellosis and Leishmaniasis test.

Bitches bred in October will whelp in December. Serious consultation with your huntsman is important to ascertain the best working hounds to breed from. Breed only the number of hounds that you require to maintain the size of your pack. A guide would be to replace approximately 20% a year (e.g., to replace six (6) couple in a pack size of 30 couple, 2 to 3 litters should be sufficient).

Do not invent a new breeding program in your early years as a new Master. If the pack had a successful hunting history and type of hound, guard those tail male and female lines to ensure they are not lost.

If your hunt uses puppy walkers (see “Foxhound Kennel Notebook”) make sure the walkers have clear guidance on what they should and should not do.

Keep in mind these are pack animals, so you do not want them to stay away from the pack too long. Puppy walkers need clear, simple guidelines and must not allow puppies to run amuck by unsupervised time loose. The mission is to acclimate them to people and life around them, learn their names, learn to walk on a lead and return to the pack. Make sure that sufficient attention is paid to the puppies when they are back from puppy walkers.

## **Horses and Stables**

Depending on your hunt, this can be a major expense of running your hunt. Many hunts give their professionals a horse allotment so they can buy and care for their own horses. If the hunt provides the horses, these are helpful suggestions:

Again one Master, or someone with knowledge, must take charge and prevent unwanted interference by others.

Buy sound, sane horses that suit the riders and your country. Do look gift horses in the mouth! Make certain that the hunt staff appreciate their horses and are concerned about their well-being.

Good stable staff is essential. Oversee levels of feeding, raising or lowering protein and feed amounts accordingly. If individual horses are over fresh, give them an extra day's hunting; likewise give horses that are a bit jaded time off to recover. A knowledgeable person must check horses after every hunting day; otherwise minor problems are missed and become major problems.

Tack must fit the horse rather than suit the rider. Sore mouths and backs can keep a horse from hunting just as much as leg problems. Constantly check the tack for safety and wear and tear. All hard hats must fit the wearer and be replaced if involved in a cap/ground contact fall.

Be careful of "good deals" on the purchase (or gifts) of feed, hay and straw. Good quality hay and feed are well worth the expense.

A log should be kept documenting each horse's exercise, ailments, lameness, treatments and medications, costs and general stable purchases.

### **Veterinary Arrangements (Stables)**

As in the kennels, use one veterinary contact (preferably the same person), someone you can talk to and trust. Have their contact information clearly visible in the stable with a backup vet if they are not available.

Diagnosis is crucial before any treatment. If there is a question, bring in another equine veterinarian for a second opinion. Good horses are priceless and worth the best of care.

### **Farrier Arrangements**

Good farriers can frequently prevent foot and leg problems, so listen to what they have to say. Provide them with a clean, dry, well lit work environment and pay them promptly.

### **Equipment**

There will be a mass of equipment — vehicles, trailers, tractors, chainsaws, safety equipment, fencing tools, fencing material, fuel, etc. An up-to-date inventory of all equipment should be kept. Purchasing of all equipment should be planned and controlled. Preventive maintenance is the key to keeping good equipment operational and saving money in the long run. An equipment log should be kept to ensure all equipment has been properly serviced. Assign each vehicle, tractor, trailer and other hunt country equipment a specific person in charge of their care, maintenance and service booking.

### **Firearms**

If the hunt allows firearms, make sure staff has the appropriate permits or licenses and that the individual using the weapon clearly knows how and when to use it. It is recommended that one Master be responsible for this.

Firearms must be kept in an approved safe, a secured box in a vehicle or in a holster on a person or horse. Different states have different laws about transporting and using firearms. Ammunition must also be securely stored.

## **Fire Precautions**

Make sure you have adequate precautions against fire, particularly close to flammable items such as fuel, straw and hay. Fire extinguishers should be readily available and maintained annually. Periodically have the electrical systems in your kennels and barns checked for safety. Wiring in conduit is the safest. Installing lighting rods on stable and kennel roofs makes good sense.

## **Security of Premises**

Assess the security of your kennel premises for both day and night. “No Trespass” signs should be in clear view at every possible entrance and at the borders of the kennel property. There must be a clear visitors’ policy that all hunt staff/maintenance personnel are aware of. Unannounced visitors must have permission from a Master to enter the property. This is important should someone try to gain access for nefarious purposes. The huntsman or kennel personnel can deny entry simply by saying, “I have to have the Master’s permission for you to enter the premises.” There must be a responsible person living near the kennels.

## **Social Considerations**

It is a Master’s responsibility to set the example and enforce hunt standards. Don’t wait for a situation to get out of hand. Members that cause problems within the hunt should be counseled and understand their memberships could be in jeopardy should that behavior continue. Primary considerations should be any action considered a possible safety danger such as: careless riding, dangerous horses, endangering hounds, offensive behavior to other members or hunt staff, etc. It is recommended in private and subscription hunts that the by-laws clarify that any member or subscriber can be denied inclusion in the hunt for any reason at any time by majority vote of the Masters. Other considerations: proper attire for horse

and rider, hunt etiquette when hunting and at hunt functions, general behavior possibly detrimental to the hunt, misuse of cell phones, photos, social media information on hunt matters, and articles submitted without Master approval.

The rules and guidelines of the hunt should be clear to all members. It is the responsibility of each Master to enforce violations he or she observes. In the absence of a Master, that authority should be clearly delegated to someone like a Field Master, hunt secretary or hunt committee member.

## **Hunting Days**

### **Organization**

At least one Master should always be present on hunting days.

Good organization is the key to good sport. It stems first and foremost from good relationships with your landowners whose land you may access. It is also vital to have the good will of lessees of the land you hunt.

The Master organizing the day's hunting should do the following:

Contact landowners and lessees whose land is likely to be used to seek permission for that particular day's hunting.

Ensure the Master and huntsman recognize farmers by name and show courtesy to landowners or farmers that you encounter on the day. Whenever possible get off your horse when meeting them and take off your hat. Instruct your field to smile, wave and get out of the way of anyone they come across. Never obstruct or delay traffic on public roads.

Know the farm's boundaries. Know how and where to cross the land (particularly farm boundaries) so as to not cause damage and ill will.

Have knowledge of individual farming practices such as planting of crops and foaling/lambing/calving dates; Respect the fact that there

may be times you are not welcome on even the most cooperative landowner's property.

Have a texting/email list and answering machine for canceling or delaying meets because of inclement weather.

Attend funerals and/or send flowers or a donation to funerals in the area of your meets.

Arrange means of communication (two-way radios, cell phones) among the following:

Huntsman

Field Master

Whippers-in

Road whippers-in

Know how to get suitable help for emergency repairs.

Have contingency plans for various medical emergencies for people, horses and hounds. Have a list of phone numbers that may be urgently required in the event of an accident or incident.

At the meet, delegate someone to ensure all riders have signed state specific releases to protect the landowners and the hunt.

## **Contact Details/Media Considerations/Social networking**

Use the MFHA's "Guide to Kennel Standards of Care Checklist" to assist you. Ensure that you or the hunt secretary has set up a group texting facility on your mobile phones so that group messages, such as meet changes or other matters of that nature, may be communicated quickly.

Ensure that you and your staff have on your mobile phone contact numbers for the following:

Doctor

Veterinarian

Ambulance or helicopter\*

Sheriff or police, game warden and animal control officer

MFHA District Director

MFHA Executive Director

\*Vastly expensive: make every attempt to get permission from responsible party before calling in air evacuation.

Establish liaisons before each hunting season begins. Don't wait for an emergency.

Ask your members to always carry insurance cards and emergency contact numbers.

If contacted by the media, respond courteously (read the "Public Relations and Media Guidelines" and "Guidelines for Developing a Plan to Manage Anti-hunting or Animal Rights Demonstrations"), but ensure that you are confident with the position you are dealing with; if in any doubt refer them to the Executive Director of the MFHA. Keep in mind you do not have to answer media questions. Make sure you contact your district director if you've been approached.

Make sure your members understand that writing articles concerning hunt specific information must be cleared by a Master (be familiar with the MFHA "Social Media Guidelines"). Make it clear when members or guests can and cannot take or publish pictures. Pay particular attention to the use of cell phones while out hunting. Give your members guidance on their use.

## **Visiting Farmers and Landowners**

The best time for visiting landowners is prior to Autumn hunting. Know in your own mind what you want from the visit (e.g., proposals on when you can hunt; how you can make best use of the land, etc.). Pastures should not

be problems unless there are electric fences; if possible make arrangements to switch them off on hunting days and back on afterward.

If your hunt has a large territory and multiple Masters it is good policy to divide the country up among Masters for continuity and saving time.

During your visit, confirm how the landowner wishes to be warned of a hunting day, by card or telephone call. If you get on land unexpectedly, then give the relevant landowner a call whenever possible.

Care must be taken on wet pastures, especially before planting season in February and March. With arable land, propose the use of paths that are acceptable to the landowner to help you navigate the land, and stick to these throughout the season. The presence of livestock paddocks, kennels and loose dogs are ever increasing. When you are about your country and spot them, identify the owners, call on them and then send warning cards off when the hunt plans to be present.

If the Field Master is not in the mastership, make sure that he or she is properly briefed for the day on all your arrangements. Both the huntsman and the Field Master should know how to get in and out of each field.

If there is a problem on a hunting day, deal with it as soon as possible.

Remember the words: “Please”, “Thank you”, “I am sorry”, and “We will make it right”.

## **Managing the Country**

Make all the preparations that you can to improve your hunt country in the off-season. There will be trails to mow, limbs to trim and gates, bridges and hunt jumps to repair or replace.

Habitat conservation is beneficial to a variety of fauna and flora, so do not neglect covert maintenance and ensuring the prime coverts are cared for and if possible fenced to keep stock out.

If you are short of labor, arrange morning work parties of hunt supporters to undertake maintenance and improvements, but do make sure that their

time is used productively. Make sure someone is clearly in charge and have the equipment and materials they will need if they are not bringing their own.

Encourage your members to buy their hay, tack, feed and farm equipment from within your territory. Make sure they tell businesses they are members of the hunt.

## **Meets**

When arranging your meets take into account the following:

Arrange meets so as not to conflict with landowner usage of their land, lessees such as deer hunters, etc., or church services, etc.

Appoint one (1) member to be responsible for parking at the meet.

Assure safe and adequate vehicle parking.

Avoid venues that are likely to cause unnecessary traffic problems or public inconvenience.

Avoid parking opposite no passing zones, near corners or blocking entrances.

Stay off of lawns and out of planted crops.

Make sure your membership knows to pick up manure or hay at the meet. Have someone check for trash when the trailers leave.

If parking near roads, avoid causing obstruction or inconvenience to other road users whilst saddling up.

Unload the hounds early at the meet to allow them to empty out in a place that won't be offensive to the landowner. If you unload near a dwelling or on a lawn move off swiftly. Car followers should have a clear set of rules so as not to interfere with sport or landowners. They must never enter land unless they were given specific permission by the landowner or a Master.

## Neighboring Hunt Country

Hounds may hunt a fox over the boundary of their country until they account for him or lose him. They may not then draw for a fresh fox.

### Tips for a Happy Master and Hunt

*Advice from Brian Perring and Richard Gurney, MFH of Old Surrey Burstow and West Kent. Article copied with permission from Horse & Hound.*

Time spent on reconnaissance is never wasted – the biggest problems always come from the person you thought you should have warned but didn't. You must get around to seeing everyone; you will get a gut feeling and learn to know who must be contacted and warned.

It may be stating the obvious, but the hunt is as good as its last visit. It is easy to think you should not have jumped into that field of cows, but it is the end of the season and you will not be back for seven months, and by then the farmer will have forgotten. I can assure you categorically that he will not. In fact, he never will forget. You must see him that night.

Never assume, never presume – if there is somewhere you are allowed to go for the first time in a long while and the land owner says it is fine only if you make sure the gate at the bottom of the drive is closed, make sure it is closed. Even with everything else you have to do, go and make sure, or send someone you trust completely.

Never be afraid to grovel – this you will find is a necessary part of the job. An MFH uses four words more than any others, “please”, “thank you”, and “sorry”. Out of these, and depending where you hunt, “sorry” is perhaps used most. Never be afraid to grovel, and then grovel some more.

Personal cards will always be remembered – we may live in the age of the email but there is no substitute for a hand-written card or letter saying thank you or sorry. It will be remembered and, although time-consuming, it is worth it.

Summer visits – do your summer visiting and remember to find out the name of other family members.

Keep a black book of all your contacts in one place – be organized: file them meet by meet ensuring you don't forget land owners, tenants, game keepers or pony paddock owners.

Learn subscriber's names – debatably more important than hound names. Hunting couldn't survive without landowners on one side and subscribers and members on the other.

Ring farmers in the evening to thank them and to prevent any issues getting out of hand. Solving a problem that night will save you an awful lot of time later.

Always remember – you are in the entertainment business, so entertain. Smile as much as possible. Look as though you are having fun and the field will think they are as well. Although it can be stressful, it is supposed to be fun, and showing good sport to the field is what it is all about. Jumping 5ft hedges with a 6ft ditch away isn't everyone's idea of fun; jumping five or six 2ft rails with hounds running can be just as much fun for all the field.

Leave your country in a better state than you received it and you will have succeeded.

### **Saboteurs and Anti-Hunt Activity**

More information can be found in the MFHA "Guidebook & Rules" and "Guidelines for Developing a Plan to Manage Anti-hunting or Animal Rights Demonstrations".

Agree on a plan at the start of the season to deal with any incident.

Designate someone in your hunt to monitor local and county ordinances or new legislation that could negatively affect your hunt.

Identify members who may have political (local, state or federal) connections that might be useful in combating anti legislation. Give that information to your district director.

Notify the MFHA Executive Director and District Director immediately should there be a threat or actual incident.

If there is a direct threat, schedule the meet on private land.

Appoint one person who you can rely on to be present to deal with situations.

Ensure that the person so appointed is capable of remaining calm and polite in the face of provocation.

Ensure such person is well schooled on how to handle the media.

Ensure someone is appointed to take any hunt person that is overreacting away from the incident.

## **US Pony Club and Youth Participation**

Every effort should be made to encourage children to participate. United States Pony Clubs were started by foxhunters with the blessing of the MFHA, and Pony Clubs in your area are important to your hunt and the future of foxhunting, but don't neglect the children who ride but who are not Pony Club members:

Ensure a strong hunt representation in your local pony club.

Encourage interaction between the pony club, 4H, riding clubs, eventing stables and your hunt.

Arrange rallies, hound exercise and trail rides at the hunt kennels.

Promote hunter trials for pony club members by making land and assistance available.

Provide sponsorship for pony clubbers' and other children's activities.

Arrange suitable hunt meets and activities during school holidays for children.

Have an educational weekend for children from any riding discipline.

## MFHA Publications

- The **“MFHA Constitution and By-Laws”**, 2010, starting on page 5, “Duties of Members and Member Hunts.” *“Duties. It shall be the duty of every member (Master or ex-Master), subscribing member and member hunt to observe and obey these By-Laws and any rules and regulations promulgated by the board of directors from time to time which are consistent with the purposes of this Corporation, to observe and comply with the guidelines for the conduct of the sport of foxhunting and to engage in no activity which will tend to materially and adversely affect the sport of foxhunting or its reputation, and to avoid conduct unbecoming a Master of Foxbounds, a foxhunt or a foxhunter.”*

The By-Laws cannot be changed without a membership vote. Only Masters and ex-Masters have a vote in the MFHA. The By-Laws provide you with the MFHA rules, structure and guidelines.

- The most comprehensive guide for Masters is the **“MFHA Guidebook & Rules”**, 2015, under “(G) THE MASTER – DUTIES AND RIGHTS.” There are reams of good information to help Masters; however, some of it refers to a time when many Masters hunted their own hounds, bringing them into a hunt and leaving with them. Also, seldom did more than one or two Masters lead a hunt. Today, most hunts have multiple Masters regardless of whether they are a subscription, membership, or private pack.

*“This guidebook contains the minimum standards and objectives to which Masters, subscribing members and member hunts of the MFHA should and, in some cases, shall adhere. Hunts that do not continue to meet the standards set forth in these rules, or that act in a manner contrary to the best interests of the sport, may be dropped from the roster of recognized and registered hunts*

*by majority vote of the board of directors or be subject to warning, fine, probation, suspension or reduction in status.”*

The “MFHA Guidebook & Rules” is written to assist Masters with their duties as leaders of their hunt.

- The “**Code of Hunting Practices**”, 2015, is the most important resource a Master has to make decisions that will affect his or her hunt and the sport of foxhunting: *“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.”*

*“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.”*

It is imperative that all Masters be thoroughly familiar with all of the above content and that they ensure that their hunt staff is as well.

Other important MFHA publications are:

- “**Introduction to Foxhunting**”, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 2013, a introductory guide to mounted hunting with hounds. A great tool to encourage new member participation.
- “**A Kid's Guide to Foxhunting**”, 2013, an easy to follow guide detailing what young people need to know about the sport of foxhunting.

- **“My First Foxhunt”** children’s coloring book, 2013, a fun way for youngsters to learn about what happens at a foxhunt.
- **“Forming a Hunt”**, 2003, is a guide developed to help hunts minimize conflict and problems that may occur when a hunt is forming or re-organizing. It is an excellent source of information on how to successfully structure and manage a hunt and its staff. Having a comprehensive set of by-laws and sound structure when the hunt is organized will minimize future problems. Included in this guide is information on Masters’ responsibilities and duties.

*“Masters are responsible for all aspects of hunt staff employment. This includes hiring and firing, as well as employment contracts, which should cover salaries, additional benefits, bonuses, medical and workers compensation coverage, work schedules and vacation policy.*

*“The title of “Senior Master” is a term that is often misunderstood. The MFHA recognizes the senior Master as the longest serving Master. It simply denotes length of service, not necessarily authority. Most Joint Masters work well on the basis that they are equal, but each has specific responsibilities and duties. The MFHA requires a clear delineation of which Master is responsible for MFHA requirements, including bound registrations, hunt dues, and the annual questionnaire. One Master should be primarily responsible for the kennels and staff.*

If professional staff is employed, they cannot and should not be expected to be directed by all of the Masters equally. That is a formula for chaos and hunt staff problems. However, hunt staff must be respectful to all Joint Masters, regardless of their term of office, and if problems arise, feel comfortable going to the Master in charge of staff and kennels to discuss solutions.

*“There comes a time when a Master should step down and he or she has a responsibility to recognize when the time is appropriate and assist in developing a suitable replacement well in advance. This is a very personal and difficult decision. Factors such as inability to ride, health, finances, availability of a*

*suitable replacement and other considerations all come into play. However, the most successful hunts have long-term masterships.”*

- **“Public Relations and Media Guidelines”**, 2015, is a guide containing good advice on how to handle the media and public. It also features Internet advice, liaison suggestions and other valuable information.

Masters of member hunts should attempt to cooperate with media requests. Local hunt reports, when carefully planned, are good for foxhunting. All requests that may involve major media exposure or deal with sensitive political issues must be referred to the MFHA Executive Director.

- **“Foxhound Kennel Notebook”**, 2007, a comprehensive kennel guide. Also a source of information and training tool for new huntsmen as they embark on their new position to care for and hunt a pack of hounds
- **“Guidelines for Developing a Plan to Manage Anti-hunting or Animal Rights Demonstrations”**, 2015, provides excellent advice should a hunt encounter a situation where antis attempt to demonstrate or disrupt a hunt.
- **“A Guide for Hound Shows, Puppy Shows and Performance Trials”**, 2013, assists Masters and hunts with understanding the rules of hound shows, puppy shows and performance trials and how to organize them.
- **MFHA Hunt Directory and Staff Directory**. Each published annually listing **Registered and Recognized Hunts**, Masters and ex-Masters who are members, and a **Directory of North American amateur and professional huntsmen**. A **Hunt Roster** is published by *Covertside*. The **British Baily’s Hunting Directory**, is now published in digital format only on the Baily’s website at [www.bailyshuntingdirectory.com](http://www.bailyshuntingdirectory.com).

- **“Foxhound Kennel Stud Book of North America”**, published annually in print to assure that the MFHA maintains its authority as the official registry for hounds used in mounted foxhunting. The MFHA Executive Director is the Keeper of the Stud Book and the official registrar. It is an invaluable resource for anyone making foxhound breeding decisions.

MFHA has a computerized version of the “Foxhound Stud Book” available at [www.mfha.com](http://www.mfha.com). This resource makes registering new entries, researching pedigrees, and studying proposed breeding combinations much easier.

- **“MFHA Social Media Guide”**, 2015, provides information on how to handle digital information appropriately.
- **“Guide to Leishmaniasis”**, 2014, provides information on symptoms and actions necessary for responding to this hound disease.
- **“The Secret World inside the Animal Rights Agenda”**, 2011, provides insight into the animal rights agenda.
- **“MFHA Guide to Kennel Standards of Care Checklist”**, 2013. A laminated poster to be used in kennels for reference.
- **Legacy Brochures**, 2012, providing information on how to contribute towards preserving and promoting mounted foxhunting for future generations.









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