

CODE OF HUNTING PRACTICES



MASTERS OF FOXHOUNDS ASSOCIATION
OF NORTH AMERICA

Promote. Preserve. Protect.

2022

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Constitution & By-Laws; 2010

Forming a Hunt: Considerations and Structure; 2003

Foxhound Kennel Notebook (4th Edition); 2007

Guidebook & Rules; 2021

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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), each Master and the governing body of each member Hunt agrees to be bound by and shall adhere to the MFHA's "Constitution & By-Laws", "Code of Hunting Practices" and "Guidelines & Rules", which may be amended from time to time. Furthermore, each Master and member Hunt agrees to cooperate with any investigation by the MFHA of any alleged infractions and will accept as final the decision of the MFHA on any question or issue arising under said "Constitution & By-laws", "Code of Hunting Practices" and "Guidelines & Rules". By accepting membership in the MFHA, each Master and member Hunt agrees to hold the MFHA and its officers, directors and employees harmless, and shall indemnify and reimburse the MFHA, and its officers, directors and employees for the reasonable attorneys fees incurred in connection with any action taken by the MFHA involving such Master and/or member Hunt to enforce the

MFHA's "Constitution & By-laws", "Code of Hunting Practices", and/or "Guidelines & Rules".

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 must be conducted within the confines of the law. It is the responsibility of the Master to ensure that all hunting activities are conducted in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations. In the event of any possible conflict between the MFHA guidelines and the law, the law controls.
3. 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. Should there be any concerns voiced by a landowner, make every attempt to immediately alert the Master, and if he or she is not available, the Huntsman. Remember the Landowner is ALWAYS right. Remove your protective helmet and dismount if possible when talking to a disgruntled Landowner.
4. 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 in a hole, brush pile, etc., treeing it, or bringing it to bay unharmed. 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 "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) There shall be no stopping, blocking of earths, holes, pipes and

the like under any circumstances.

(c) When the quarry is run to ground, treed or brought to bay, it will be left undisturbed and shall not be dug or bolted by any person and run again.

(d) The reason we call the sport “fox hunting” and not “fox chasing”) 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.

(e) Use of Terriers is prohibited.

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 MFHA does not consider the use of Foxhunting Training Preserves (FTPs) 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 only 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.”

h) Hounds are the sole property of the Hunt unless there is a written agreement otherwise signed between the Masters and the Hunt. No huntsman shall be given hounds by the Hunt that no longer employs him or her unless that huntsman has been employed by another

Recognized or Registered Hunt. In that case, the drafted hounds, by written agreement signed by the Masters of both Hunts, become the property of the Hunt they are drafted to. In addition, none of the Hounds of a member Hunt shall ever be drafted to a Hunt, Master, or huntsman who has been deemed to be “unsanctioned” by the MFHA.

5. 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 and GPS COLLARS

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, GPS collars and other modern electronic equipment has evolved as a result:

1. GPS trackers on hounds are encouraged to protect hounds and promote safety of the public.
2. Electronic Equipment is 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 mounted and road whippers-ins in vehicles carrying radios and GPS trackers 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. Pick up and remove hay or manure your horse-leaves 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 avoid getting ahead of 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 be ahead of the quarry; to do so is to spoil your own and everyone else's sport.

3. Be quiet when hounds are near.
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 have no interest in hunting. Make every effort not to offend these people in any way. 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.