

TOGETHER



TO STOP HUNTING WITH DOGS



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Hunting with Dogs Briefing

Northern Ireland is the only part of the UK where hunting foxes with dogs is still legal. The cruelty of this “sport” and its irrelevance in terms of livestock protection were accepted by English, Welsh and Scottish Governments over 20 years ago.

Many arguments were unsuccessfully put forward by the hunting fraternity about why hunting should be allowed to continue. This briefing outlines those arguments and explains why they failed.

Hunting foxes with dogs is necessary for “pest” control.

Perhaps the starkest repudiation of this point is that many hunts have been found to breed foxes in artificial earths to ensure more foxes are available to hunt.

Hunting foxes with dogs is the least effective and indiscriminate method of “controlling” their numbers. Night shooting with thermal imaging is the most effective way to kill particular foxes which have been shown to predate on livestock. A proposed ban on hunting with dogs will not deter farmers ability to shoot foxes humanely as a form of pest control.

Foxes also have a key role to play in the management of rabbits and rats which many farmers support as nature’s way of pest control.

Furthermore, levels of fox predation on lambs, in Scotland for example, are between 0.6% and 1.5% of all fatalities. (The Utility of Killing Foxes in Scotland, Prof S. Harris, Bristol University). The same report reveals that forty years of science shows that if a fox is killed, it is typically replaced by another within 5 days.

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Hunting with dogs is a way of life.

This is indisputably correct - but so were bear baiting, cock fighting and dog fighting. Mahatma Gandhi said you can judge a nation by its treatment of animals. A 21st century nation that still allows hunting with dogs is an anachronism.

We have no objections to the equestrian, pageantry or social side of mounted fox hunts. The skill of a huntsman controlling over thirty hounds is something to behold. Bona fide drag hunting can provide all these things without an animal being chased and killed by a pack of dogs.

Hunting with dogs is a town versus country issue.

Yes, hunting with dogs only happens in the countryside, but many of those who hunt live in cities. Local farmers often complain about the damage that mounted hunts do to their land and livestock. Road traffic is routinely disrupted and high-handed attitudes do little to encourage the support of rural communities.

Polling figures* reveal that hunting with dogs is more-or-less equally reviled by large majorities in town and country. (*Survation poll for LACS 4-15 Feb 2022).

Ending hunting with dogs would have a negative impact on tourism.

Mounted hunts only publicise their activities to the local hunting fraternity. Only those with considerable resources could afford to visit Northern Ireland with their horses. 'Hunting with dogs has been banned in Scotland since 2003 and tourism figures have not been impacted.

There is at least one large scale hare coursing event that attracts considerable numbers. Many "country fairs" attract similar numbers and there is no reason why such events couldn't replace hare coursing.

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Hunting with dogs brings jobs to rural communities.

If bona fide drag hunting replaced hunting with dogs, farriers, stables and hound kennels could continue to operate and there would be no job losses.

'Chasing and killing a mammal with dogs, has no place in a modern Ireland.'



Hunting with dogs is the "thin end of the wedge".

"It'll be fishing next and you'll want us all to be vegans" is a refrain that often pops up in discussions about hunting with dogs. Animal Welfare organisations and those opposed to hunting with dogs tend not to promote any eating lifestyles and prefer to concentrate on securing the highest welfare of any animals. They also prioritise the most egregious activities recognised by the majority of the public.

Chasing and killing a mammal with dogs, has no place in a modern society. It originated (alongside hare coursing) from England in the 16th Century.



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