

HUNTING ETIQUETTE

The major concern of people wishing to hunt for the first time seems to be a fear of wearing or doing the wrong thing. Whilst etiquette is important to ensure hunting has an acceptable public image, we hope that people who come to hunt will find us tolerant and helpful. We hope this guide will help you feel more comfortable and confident if you should choose to come out with us for your first experience of hunting. You will not remember all of it, but the more you hunt the more you will realise the reasons for a code of conduct.

What should I wear?

Whilst there is formal hunting attire that regular followers wear, there are a variety of alternatives which are perfectly acceptable. Starting from the top, any form of safety hat/cap is acceptable, but we would prefer the cover to be of a sober colour and without tassles or pom poms. A hunting shirt and stock, shirt and tie are acceptable under coat/jacket, but once again brightly coloured coats should be avoided. Fawn breeches are preferred, but white breeches/Jodhpurs are acceptable if they are all you have. Long boots or Jodhpur boots are safest. Spurs are completely optional. Back protectors are also acceptable and are indeed recommended for novice children.

VLH Etiquette

Master -Huntsman: Red Coat, white breeches, copper top boots and black cap.

Subscriber: Black/Navy coat, fawn breeches/Jodhpurs, black boots and black/navy cap.

Autumn Hunting-By Meet: Rat catcher, fawn breeches/Jodhpurs, brown boots and brown cap.

What should I do before coming to a meet mounted?

The first thing to do is telephone 07710 920892 and ask Julia Tissington-Hon Secretary, if you may join the hunt for the day and check the amount (cap) you will be required to pay. You can also find out the best place to park and any other matter you are unsure of. She will want to help you so don't be afraid to ask questions. Also by "booking in" you can be informed of any last minute changes due to weather, farming problems etc.

What should I have in my pockets?

The money for your cap, a penknife, some baler twine and possibly some food. You may even consider carrying a handkerchief or bandage for emergencies. If you are carrying a mobile telephone it should be turned off during hunting. If you are a complete stranger, or suffer from any medical condition, it is a good idea to carry a printed copy of your details so that we can help you should you have an accident.

Going to the meet?

It is much more relaxing to allow plenty of time to get to the meet/unboxing place as you are more likely to find a convenient place to unbox. Please do not park in gateways or opposite other boxes or vehicles. Where possible ensure vehicles are completely off the road, especially on narrow roads, and allow room for agricultural vehicles to pass.

What should I do at the meet?

Etiquette demands that you should find the hunt secretary and offer her your cap, rather than waiting for her to approach you. Similarly you should say good morning to the Joint Masters (the correct greeting being "*Good morning Master*" even if you know them personally), whilst ensuring your horse does not get amongst the hounds. In particular find out who is the field master for the day and keep behind him/ her and obey his/her instructions. If hospitality has been provided at the meet, be sure to thank your host before you leave.

How can I tell who that Hunt Staff are?

The Huntsman of The Hounds wears a red coat with five buttons on the front and two buttons on the back. The huntsman carries a white whip. The Joint Masters wears a Red Coat with 4 buttons on the front and two buttons on the back and carry full responsibility for the day and have invested considerable time and money in the hope of providing you with an enjoyable day. You should understand that if anything goes wrong or if damage is done, it is the Joint Masters who will have to put matters right. In return you should treat them with some respect and give them priority at gates or jumps.

Is there anything special that my horse should wear?

If you know your horse is liable to kick it should wear a red ribbon at the top of its tail. If it is a young horse and you are not sure of its temperament it should wear a green ribbon. In both cases they should be kept at the back of the field. If the person in front of you is going through a gateway and has one arm behind their back you should be aware that their horse may kick if you crown them.

Is there anything I need to know about the hounds?

Do not assume that because your horse does not kick your dog at home that he/she will necessarily tolerate a pack of hounds. Even if he/she will, the huntsman does not know that and you will worry him if you get amongst the hounds - so it is your duty to keep away from them.

Jumping etiquette

Do not attempt to jump if there is a hound anywhere near a jump. Give Hunt Staff priority and if you know your horse is a poor jumper let others go first. If your horse refuses, clear the jump quickly and let others go before you try again. If you break a jump make sure it is stock proof before you go on (this is where you might need the baler twine) and ensure you report the breakage to a master or Hunt Secretary. If you attempt a gate and break it you will be expected to pay for it.

Do I have to jump?

Whilst we try to put in as much jumping as possible a lot will depend on the area being hunted and the ground conditions. There are nearly always easy ways round a jump and a number of people don't jump at all, so there is usually someone to follow. If you are a stranger and do not want to jump it is best to talk to the field master who will know of a regular non jumper to pair you with.

Riding near or through livestock

When riding near or through livestock ensure you are between the stock and the fence and ride at a speed they will tolerate without getting upset. If stock bunch up in a corner, stop and wait for them to move out. You should not enter any field without the Field Master unless instructed to do so.

End of the day

It is important to remember that without a Huntsman and the Master and his Hounds there would be no sport. A thank you goes a very long way in helping these people feel appreciated, especially Hunt Staff who will probably be cold and wet and tired by the end of the day. It is traditional to say "goodnight" at the end of the day.

Did you fall off, get shouted at?

Don't worry, we have all been there. It's all part of becoming an experienced horseman/woman!

General Etiquette

It is surprising how many people leave their manners on the ground when they get on a horse. Please thank cars for slowing down, wave cars on when you see the Masters wave them on, and keep to the nearside if you hear the shout "car please". A smile and "good morning" to people on foot will help to dispel the myth that everyone on horseback is a snob and too good to talk to people on foot.

Have Fun, that's what you are there for and we want you to enjoy yourself and come back again.

HUNTING TERMS, LANGUAGE AND SIGNALS

Autumn- By Meets Hunting	The early part of hunting from August until the opening Meet.
Babbler or Babbling	A hound that speaks when it is not hunting is said to be a babbler or babbling.
Bitch	Female hound
By invitation	This sometimes appears on the meet card of hunt that has been invited to hunt in another hunt's country
Cap	A daily charge to come out hunting.
"Car please"	Is shouted to tell the field to keep to the left to let the cars through on the road.
Cast	When the hounds are looking for the line. The huntsman may cast the hounds towards where he thinks the hounds will pick up
Check	When the hound lose the line.
Couples	Hounds are counted in couples (ie one hound, a couple, a couple and a half, two couples etc.) Couples are also two collars linked on a chain and can be seen hanging on the hunt staffs' saddles.
Cur Dog	A canine which is not a hound.
Dog	Male hound.
Entered	An entered hound is a hound that has done a season's hunting.
Feather	Hounds are said to feather or be feathering when they have the line but are unable to speak it.
Field	The mounted followers.
Foil	Any smell or disturbed ground which spoils the line
"Gate please"	Shouted backwards on going through a gate which should be closed.
Gate shutter	A person specifically designated to shut gates and mend fences. Sometimes wears a white armband. Even when these people are present you should shut gates where necessary.
"Good morning"	The appropriate greeting at a Meet.
"Good night"	The appropriate salutation for the end of the day even if it was an Autumn Hunting morning which ended before midday.
Green Ribbon	Worn on the tail of a young horse.
Hand behind back	Means this horse night kick if you crowd it.
Hand in the air by gateway	Signal to people coming towards the gate, but out of hearing, that the gate should be shut. The response to which should be to hold your hand in the air to show you have got the message and will shut the gate.
"Headland please"	Shouted when the Field is required to ride in single file close to the fence boundary of field in order to protect crops or sensitive grassland.

Heel	Hounds are said to be hunting heel when they hunt the reverse direction to the route of the scent.
“Hold hard”	Shouted by the Field Master to stop the field overtaking him/her.
Hot bitches	In season bitches.
Hound	All scent hunting dogs are referred to as hounds. It is the duty of mounted followers to keep out of the way of hounds, not vice versa.
Huntsman	The man who hunts the hounds. There is only one huntsman on the hunting field per day, he may also be a master, and he has absolute right of way at all times.
Hunt	A hunting day usually consists of 3-5 hunts, each hunt being 2-5 miles long. Sometimes incorrectly referred to as “runs” or “lines”.
Hunt Button & Collar	Subscribers who have over a period of time have gained knowledge and been helpful to the hunt may be awarded the hunt button and collars of the hunt. The buttons are black with the hunt logo and the collars are green.
Hunt Staff	The people responsible for working the hounds ie Huntsman and whippers in. they may be Masters amateurs or professionals.
“Kick on”	You may get this response when you make way for a Master or Huntsman at a gate or jump. It means you don’t have to wait for him or her and should carry on.
Lawn Meet	A Meet where refreshments are provided by someone, usually the owner of the property where the meet is taking place. This person should be thanked by everyone as they leave the Meet.
Line	The scent left by the quarry/trail layer.
“Loose Horse”	Shouted when someone has fallen off and the horse is running away.
Master	Maybe a Joint Master. These are the people responsible for the running of the hunt and particularly for liaison with the farmers and landowners. They should have right of way at all times second only to hunt staff.
“Master/Huntsman/ Whip/Hound please”	This means give way to these people as they have a job to do. If it is heard on a road or a track everyone should get to one side, not line both sides, to reduce the chances of them being kicked.
“Master/Huntsman/ Whip/Hound on the right/left”	This means the Master/Whip/Hound should be let through on the side shouted. The side corresponding to the direction of travel of the majority of the Field.
Mixed Pack	A pack consisting of dogs and bitches
Mute	A hound which hunts without speaking is a mute
Opening Meet	The start of formal hunting
Puppy	A hound which is new to hunting that season. It will appear fully grown.

Rat Catcher	Term used to describe the official dress for mounted followers during Autumn Hunting and consists of a Tweed jacket as opposed to a black jacket. Rat Catcher is also an acceptable form of dress after the opening Meet.
Red Ribbon	Worn on the tail of a known kicker. These horses should be kept at the back of the field until they become educated and no longer need to wear a ribbon.
Ronald 01	Ronald is a hound's name and 01 is the year he was entered. Therefore Ronald 01 is likely to one year older than the suffix indicates. So in the season starting 2002 he will be three years old.
Riot or rioting	When hounds hunt something other than that which they are supposed to be hunting, they are rioting.
Scent	The smell, indiscernible to the human nose, left by the scent. The hounds also use the smell of the disturbed ground where the scent have been to stay on the line.
Season	Runs from August until March. Autumn Hunting will start once the harvest is under way, usually in August and will consist of short hunts in early morning or early evening. Formal hunting starts with the Opening Meet and will go on for as long as country to hunt over can be found, usually to mid March
Secretary	Usually the Honerary Hunt Secretary (unpaid) who deals with day to day enquirires from subscribers and those wishing to hunt on a daily basis. Visitors should seek this person out at the meet and offer to pay their cap to them.
Speak or speaking	Hounds do not bark, they speak or are speaking when they are "on the line" (hunting a scent).
Stern	A hound's tail.
Subscriber	Someone who pays an annual subscription to hunt with a pack of hounds.
Training to Meet	These are the Meets before the opening Meet. The hunts are shorter, the dress code less formal and the Cap reduced from the normal rate.
Walk	Hounds at Walk, often known as puppy Walking, is where whelps are sent to private homes, in minimums of two's, from the age of eight weeks until they are too big and boisterous for the walkers, at which point they return to the kennels to learn how to fit into the pack.
"Ware Hole/Wire/Glass"	Ware is pronounced "War" and means beware. Therefore if you hear "War 'ole" or "Ware 'ole" it actually means mind out there is a hole in the ground coming up! Similarly any other hazard
Whelp	A new born hound is a whelp and remains so until it comes back from walk.
Whip in the air (usually by Field Master)	This means stand still where you are, not wait until you get level with the Field Master and then stop.

Whip held to side by Huntsman	If the whip is in the Huntsman's right hand he will be keeping the hounds to his left. You should therefore let him pass so that his horse is between you and the hounds.
Whipper in	The person who helps the Huntsman control the hounds. This person has right of way at all times and will only give way to the Huntsman.